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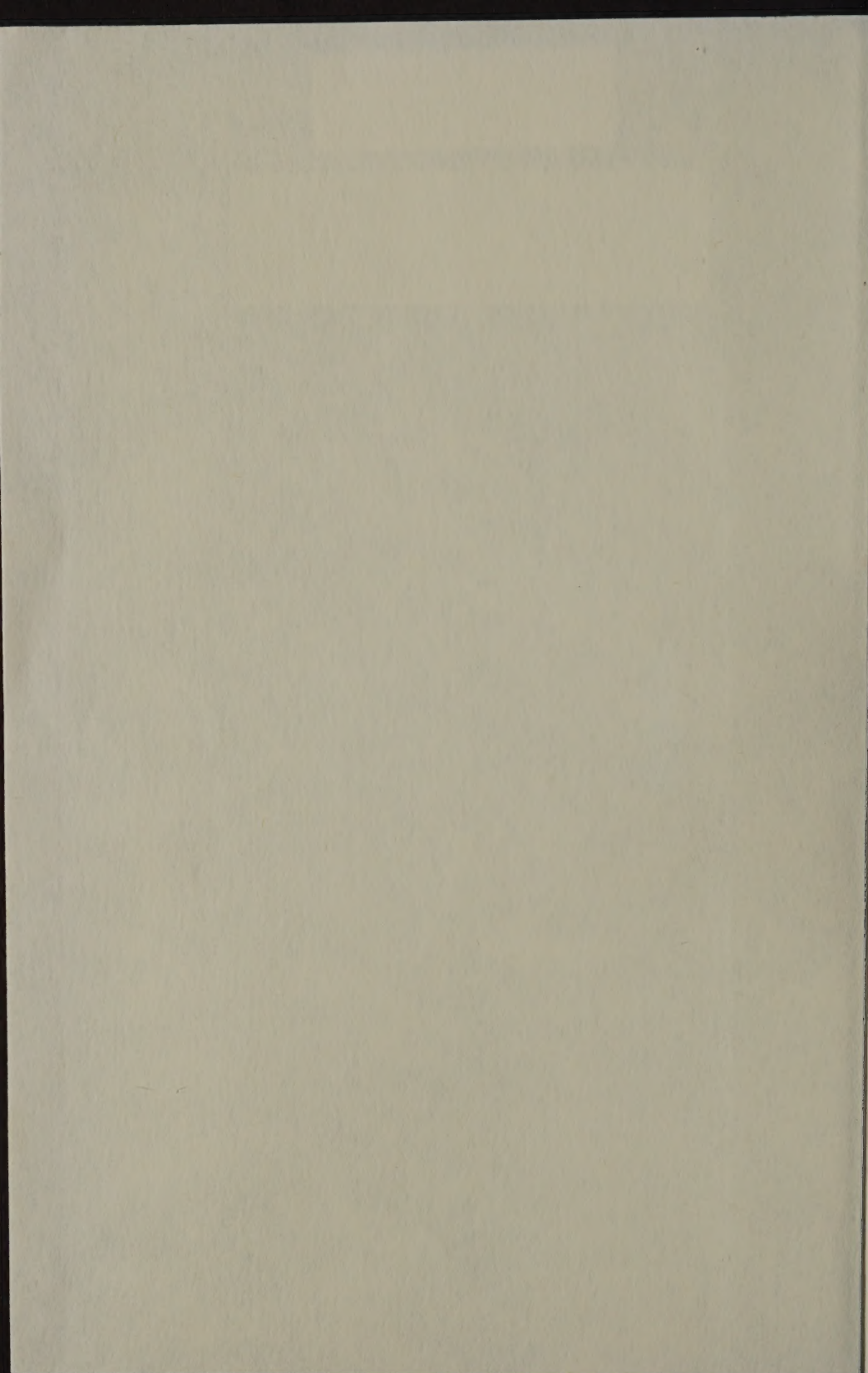


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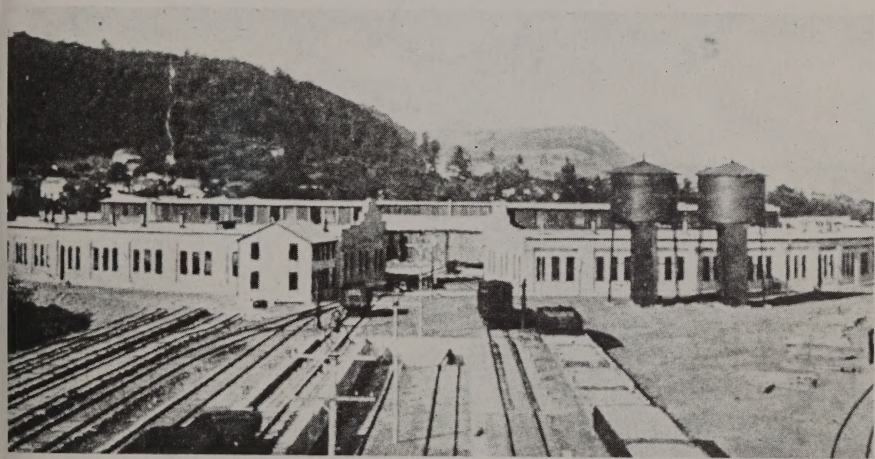
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# In Old Oneonta



New D. & H. Round House, Oneonta, N. Y.







# IN OLD ONEONTA

BY

Edwin R. Moore

VOLUME ONE

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## FOREWARD

During the more than two years that "*Oneonta, Past and Present*" has appeared twice weekly in *The Oneonta Star*, the author has been amazed at the interest in local history shown by so many people. That interest, together with the much appreciated help of Mr. Nathan Pendleton, has resulted in the publication of this collection of historical vignettes from the column.

It was impossible to include in one book all of the more than two hundred stories which have appeared. A selection was therefore necessary and it can only be hoped that the sketches which you have enjoyed most were among those chosen.

It is planned to publish subsequent volumes of material which has been omitted from this book and of stories still to be written.

Every effort has been made to insure accuracy of the facts contained herein but no researcher is infallible. If you discover any errors, the author would appreciate it if you would call them to his attention. He is presently researching a new and comprehensive history of Oneonta and cooperation in reporting possible mistakes in published material would help greatly.

During the year 1900 the total number of persons who were employed in the various industries of the State was 1,000,000. The number of persons who were employed in the various industries of the State was 1,000,000.

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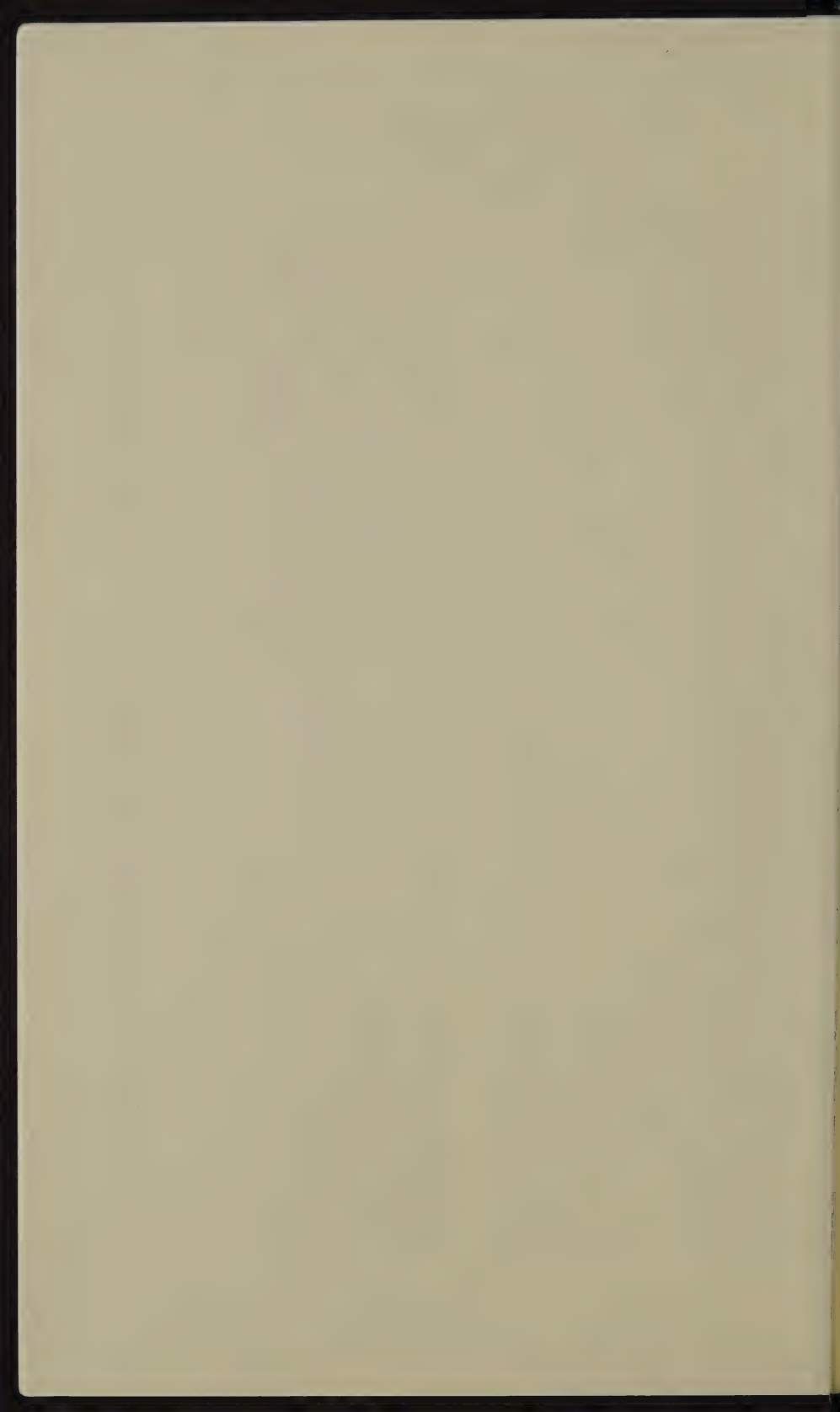
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## FRITTS AND THE TALKIES

On any given night it is probable that no one in an Oneonta Theatre audience knows that less than 100 yards from where he is sitting was born the man who made the talking picture possible.

Few Oneontans have ever heard of Charles Edgar Fritts, an inventive genius who was so far ahead of his time that it took the Patent Office 40 years to catch up with him. Buried in the files of the Radio Corporation of America is the strange story of this crippled wizard whose name is virtually unknown and yet who can properly be called the father of the talking motion picture, the tape recorder and much of television.

His major invention was a method and apparatus for photographing sound, recording it, transmitting it electrically and then translating the photograph back into its original sound.

The idea seemed like an insane dream to the examiners when he applied for a patent in 1880. They could see no possible practical use for the invention.

In 1916, the experts caught up with the thinking of Charles Edgar Fritts and the patent was granted, 11 years after the inventor had died in a dingy New York apartment, surrounded by his broken dreams. The patent was bought from Fritts' heirs by the Victor Talking Machine Co. and later transferred to RCA.

Charles Edgar Fritts was born on October 13, 1838, in a wooden building at 55 Chestnut Street on the site of the present Dentists' building. His father, William Fritts, was prominent in the early days of the community, conducting a store on the site now occupied by the Bell Clothing Company.

Early in his adult life Fritts was a teacher. In 1854, at the age of 16, he opened a select school in Oneonta and was later an instructor in Greek at Delaware Literary Institute, Franklin, once a famous school which drew students from all over the eastern United States.

He had a passion for things mechanical which eventually led him into watch repairing. For some time he worked in the local jewelry store of Potter C. Burton. The latter part of his life was spent in New York City where, in deep frustration and in dire poverty most of the time, he worked on his inventions. He was widely known to scientists of the day, who flocked to his squalid lodgings to receive inspiration and ideas.

The record does not state what paltry sum was paid for the invention nor does it reveal what vast fortunes have been made by the industry built upon the genius of Charles Edgar Fritts, native Oneontan.

## THE OLD McCAMMON

If the census takers of 1900 had enumerated pianos it would probably have been found that nearly every Oneonta family owned one. This was before the day of motion pictures, the radio, phonograph, and television. The parlor upright provided about the chief source of family entertainment.

If a survey had been made of the makes of pianos it would undoubtedly have been disclosed that the name "McCammon" led all the rest.

The McCammon was a home town product made by a company controlled by Oneonta men. From 1892 until shortly after the turn of the century the factory, located at the foot of Rose Avenue in the buildings now occupied by the Otsego Iron and Metal Corp., turned out an average of 50 pianos a week.

The McCammon Piano Co. was an old and well known firm established in Albany in 1832. In 1891 the company was purchased by a group of Oneonta men which included George B. Baird, Russell Baird, Charles F. Shelland, D. F. Wilber and S. M. Baird. The plant was moved to Oneonta and opened for business in buildings formerly occupied by a chair factory.

According to a contemporary report: "The buildings are connected with an internal railroad, communicating with various departments, and are filled with electric bells and speaking tubes which connect the office with every department. There is here in use the Bundy time recorder."

Cabinet work was very important in pianos of that date and the company kilns held quantities of light and dark mahogany, French, Japanese and Circassian walnut, quartered oak, rosewood and ebony.

Many wood carvers and experts in wood working and finishing came to Oneonta with the McCammon Co. Some stayed after the concern went out of business, among them the paternal grandfather of City Police Attorney John J. Steidle. As an expert cabinet maker, the elder Steidle was paid \$15 a week, the highest wage paid anyone in the plant.

The company was dissolved nearly 60 years ago but the McCammon piano was well made and possibly some are still in use. We wonder.



## WANDERING BUILDINGS

Nowadays when a site is cleared for construction the buildings thereon are generally razed. In the days before the automobile created traffic problems, it was common practice to move buildings through the village streets from one location to another.

For one reason or another moving operations were sometimes suspended for days at a time, consequently almost completely blocking thoroughfares.

Many Oneonta buildings now rest blocks from where they were built. The house at 104 Center Street, at the corner of Gault Avenue, was built in 1850 on the present site of the Sears Farm Store (formerly the Townsend Hardware). It was occupied for some years by Dr. T. D. Evans, whose vocations of tailor and veterinarian made a somewhat unique combination.

When the Susquehanna House, a hostelry which stood for many years on the site of the Baird block on the corner of Main and Chestnut Streets, was demolished in the early '90s, the exceptionally large kitchen was moved and is now the double house at 10-12 Columbia Street.

The Lutheran Church on Grove Street was once the First Baptist Church and faced Main Street on the brow of the hill back of the building until recently occupied by the Salvation Army. It was built in 1835 and in 1883 was moved farther back on the hill and an auditorium facing Grove Street was added.

Dr. Samuel H. Case, an Oneonta pioneer who practiced medicine in these parts for more than 60 years, built in 1834 a residence and a small office building on sites now occupied by the Endicott Johnson and Triangle shoe stores. In 1896 they were moved to Linden Avenue and the office building attached to the house as a kitchen wing. The house, now 30 Linden Avenue, still shows evidence of the architectural style of 125 years ago.

Part of the home of Dr. and Mrs. Scott Farley at 23 Ford Avenue was built by H. S. Pardee as a workshop on the Diana Restaurant site. It was moved to make room for the Moody and Vosburgh building erected in 1873. This eventually became the Arlington Hotel and was destroyed in the "Wooden Row" fire of 1908.

The building on Hamilton Avenue now occupied in part by the plumbing shop of Robert Daley once stood on the site of the Westcott block, facing Main Street. It was built in 1866 by a man named Brockway.

Oneonta's first school was built in 1812 just about where Broad Street now meets Main. In 1841 it was moved to the rear of the John Cutshaw house, 96 Chestnut Street, where it remained until the Victory store was built in 1954.

## THE STAR IS BORN

June 19, 1890 was not quite a day like all days. Life went on about as usual in the quiet, though busy, town of 6,305 souls but there was a difference. After months of preparation and days of frustrating delay, Harry W. Lee had reached his goal and the first issue of *The Oneonta Daily Star* was on the streets. From the plant in the old Wilber National Bank building, standing where South Main Street touches Main, hundreds of copies had been mailed to subscribers at \$4 a year and stacks of papers were on sale in stores for two cents each.

The *Star* was 70 years old on Sunday. The four page, hand-set issue of nearly three-quarters of a century ago bears little resemblance to the multi-paged journal of today with its numerous illustrations, its many ads and its columns mirroring the life of community, state and nation. But it's the same paper, grown through the years, by careful nurture, to a size, appearance and influence probably little dreamed of by its founder.

The Oneontans of 1890 welcomed a daily paper with wide eyes. No longer would they have to wait a week for the next installment of that serial. Now they could read today whom the two village policemen had arrested yesterday. They could learn the name of that fascinating girl visiting down the street before she left town.

The first issue provided absorbing reading. The housewife, settled in her rocker, learned that Conant's Cash Store was selling butter for 14 cents a pound, eggs at 13 cents a dozen and potatoes for 30 cents a bushel. She probably decided to buy one of the ladies' ribbed vests which B. F. Sisson was offering for 12½ cents each and to ask her husband to take her to the strawberry festival which the Mechanics Hose Company was holding that night at its London Avenue quarters.

The business man lighted up his All Stock-No Style cigar, made right here in Oneonta, and noted that William Scanlon was offering full meals for 20 cents. He read of the plans being made for the institution of Canton David Wilber, Patriarchs Militant, that evening and went over the orders for the big parade which would march through streets arched with banners and gay with bunting. He learned that it was hoped that the Normal School lawn would be ready for the closing exercises on July 2 of the school's first year.

The 993 employees of the village's 28 factories hurried home to find how Oneonta stood in the State Baseball League. They discovered that it was in third place, with Troy and Cobleskill in front and Johnstown-Gloversville, Albany and Utica bringing up the rear.

It was indeed a day much like all days but filled with a promise of better days to come, made so in part by the wisdom and labor of Harry W. Lee, fine gentleman and a journalist's journalist.

## INDIAN WORKSHOP

Near the head of Prosser Hollow, high on the broad summit of the watershed between the valleys of the Susquehanna and the Delaware, can still be seen the remains of an ancient Indian munitions factory, the only one of its kind ever found in New York State.

Here, hundreds of years before the coming of the white man, an esoteric group of specialized craftsmen plied their trade of makers of implements for war and the hunt. They left behind them thousands of artifacts and a mystery.

The road to Prosser Hollow winds up the hill from Pindar's Corners at the point where the West Davenport road hits Route 23, about three miles from Oneonta. Near its head is a small vale through which flows a little brook feeding a branch of the Ouleout. On its banks is the workshop site, identified as belonging to the early third period of Algonquin occupation.

Although known for years, no work was done there until 1934, when Ronald B. Hill, former Oneontan and an authority on Indian affairs, did considerable excavating. In 1934 a University of Rochester expedition, aided by Mr. Hill, explored the site rather thoroughly.

The site covers about one and one-half acres. Under the sod the soil is completely carbonized to a depth of from one to eight inches. In this black "Indian dirt" were found thousands of flint chips and hundreds of arrow heads and other stone implements in all stages of manufacture.

Chert scrapers indicate that arrow shafts were made here. No domestic artifacts have been found, indicating that the workshop was used solely for the making of complete hunting and war equipment. Many specimens from the site are in the Yager Museum, now owned by Hartwick College.

Except for a few pieces of white argillite, the artifacts are all of gray chert, a mineral closely allied to flint. Herein lies the mystery. Why did the Indians choose a site so inaccessible and, more important, so far from sources of raw material?

There is no native flint or chert within a hundred miles. The Indians hereabouts fashioned their cutting instruments from chunks of flint or chert found in glacial drifts and stream beds. There is no such source of material within four miles of the hilltop.

We need not look to Egypt or Mesopotamia for evidence of lost civilizations. Here, all about us, is a plenitude of remains of a culture, crude it is true, but older than those of Greece and Rome.



## TENNIS IN OLDEN DAYS

Tennis, a game now played in these parts almost exclusively by the young, was once the favorite pastime of Oneonta adults. It is true that the creaking knee and elbow set preferred the less strenuous croquet and that baseball had its many supporters but in the decades around the turn of the century, tennis was the game the village beaux and belles played.

Kids liked the game too but what chance did they have to play? To begin with, rackets and balls cost money and most youngsters were in hock to the candy shops. Your old man probably owned a good Spaulding or two but he would as willingly lend you his racing bicycle or his right arm.

Then how could a feller play on courts that were monopolized from dawn to dusk by mustachioed dandies and bustling fillies? The best you could do was to earn a little cash, as Art Holley used to do, by keeping the courts free of pebbles at 10 cents a bushel.

In 1893 there were at least four tennis clubs in town, each maintaining its own courts. The Crescent Club held sway on Ford Avenue where the residences of Mrs. Julian B. Jackson and Mrs. J. A. Dewar now stand. The Pastime Club had its courts on the corner of East and Spruce Streets about where Raymond Hayes now lives. The Watkins Avenue Club courts were on the south side of that street somewhere between Grove and Fairview. The J.M.M. (J. M. Milne) Club held forth on courts where the Bugbee School now stands.

There was a great deal of rivalry between the clubs and frequent tournaments were held. Charles A. Schumacher, Arthur Westcott and Henry Buckley were big names in Oneonta's tennis world of those days.

All of these courts, except the one at the Normal School, succumbed to building progress during the first decade of the new century. During the 'teen years there was a court back of the Y.M.C.A., where the swimming pool now is, and one back of the First Presbyterian Church. On the latter court former U. S. Senator Irving M. Ives played many a game during his Oneonta High School days. During the 1920s there were several courts at the Country Club on the land now used for a parking lot.

There was a lot of good tennis played in the old days but it is doubtful if its quality could compare with that exhibited by the present High School teams under the tutelage of George Waddington. The equipment is better now, the courts are infinitely superior and there's coaching, something most old time players never had.

## WHO KILLED HULDAH ANN?

Who killed Huldah Ann McCraney? What miscreant laced with arsenic the johnny cake and milk of this maid of 17 summers and other assorted seasons? Murder most foul, cold blooded and atrocious had been committed in our fair village on that 10th day of May, 1860, but who did it?

Most certainly it wasn't the butler. Suspicion pointed its undeviating finger at the stepmother of the deceased girl and kept pointing even after she had been tried and acquitted.

In 1858 there came to Oneonta a Mrs. Baker and her only child. John McCraney, widower and father of Huldah Ann, became enamoured of her and they were soon married, taking up their residence in a house on Dietz Street near what is now Huntington Park.

On Sunday morning, April 29, Huldah Ann McCraney made her usual preparations for church. Dressed in her best homespun, she got as far as the front steps when she became ill. She was assisted into the house and to bed, "never in her mortal frame to rise again."

It was soon rumored that the stepmother had been suspected in other communities of murdering two children of her first husband, her second husband, her sister, her sister's husband and an unrelated couple. It was found that arsenic had been purchased of an Oneonta apothecary and entered upon the books in the name of McCraney. When an autopsy revealed arsenic in the organs of the girl, Mrs. McCraney was indicted for murder by a grand jury headed by Harvey Baker.

The night the McCraney family started by carriage for Cooperstown the ringing of church bells and the firing of guns roused the town. The good burghers tumbled out of bed, dressed hastily and joined the mob which was following the carriage. A barricade had been erected on the Oneonta Creek bridge near what is now Pine Street but the party escaped by detouring by way of Maple Street.

The acquittal by the trial jury only caused public indignation to run higher than ever. When she returned to Oneonta the woman was forced to pass under an effigy of herself hung from a tree in front of her home. After nightfall the figure was soaked with turpentine and set ablaze while a torrent of stones poured down on the roof from the slopes behind the dwelling.

Subsequent trial for the murder of her second husband at Edson's Corners also resulted in acquittal. She remained in Oneonta until the death of John McCraney, apparently from natural causes, and then moved to Nebraska.

John McCraney insisted to the last that his wife was innocent.

## BARN HILL

If Monday had been July 4 in any year from the founding of Oneonta to the coming of the railroad, Barn Hill would have been the scene of great activity for in those days the Fourth was really glorious and Barn Hill was where the citizenry did its celebrating.

As you stand on the east footwalk of the Main Street viaduct you can see (at the end of Carbon Street and back of the oil tanks) a small elevation of ground covered with scrub trees and bushes. This is all that remains of what was once the most significant landmark in this part of the Susquehanna Valley, a spot that was for centuries an Indian citadel and lookout point and later a rallying ground for the white man.

Barn Hill was originally an oblong hill rising about 30 feet above its surroundings and of about three acres in area. Its top was level and clear of trees and bushes although it was surrounded by an evergreen forest of large trees. On three sides it was bordered by an impassable swamp and close to its southern base ran Silver Creek. The hill was united to the highlands on the northwest by a ridge which formed the route of the Indian trail coming down Main Street and gave access to the plateau.

When the railroad was built in the 1860s the ridge was leveled and the hill cut back. The slicing process has continued at intervals through the years until little remains of a place which once meant so much to the community.

This level-topped hill was the place for athletic contests of all kinds, for quoits and boxing bouts, for wrestling matches and foot races. Here the Militia held its training exercises, practiced marksmanship and held its dress parades. Here July Fourth was celebrated with vocal and aerial pyrotechnics. Bonfires and barbecues, baseball and bivouacs—Barn Hill saw them all.

Here were placed the cannon whose booming voices echoed from the hills in celebration of the opening of the Erie Canal and the granting of the turnpike and railroad charters. Here the victories of the Mexican War and the successes of the Union armies were celebrated.

The first settlers called the eminence Barren Hill since not a tree or shrub grew thereon. William Angell erected a barn there prior to 1820 and the transition from "Barren" to "Barn" Hill was easily made. The Indian trail came down the hill at its western end and evidence of it was visible for years. The millrace directly behind the hill follows the old course of Silver Creek.



## THE OLD FIRE HOUSE

On a fine spring day in 1879 one W. H. Barker caught 34 fish in the pool behind the Fire House. Holy mack'rel! But they weren't mackerel; they were nice fat trout.

The Fire House stood on the site of the present Municipal Building and housed the only steam fire engine in the county. The pool which yielded such a luscious haul stood directly behind it. Vestiges of the pond were found recently by workmen digging in the rear of Markson's.

The old Fire House was built in 1876 and was a two story plus basement structure containing the fire apparatus and the village offices. It was destroyed on May 22, 1906, not by fire but because of it, a distinction with a difference in this case.

On this date occurred one of Oneonta's worst fires. The early morning conflagration destroyed the Wilber National Bank block, standing where the head of South Main Street now is, and the Reuben Reynolds and Butts blocks to the west. Next came the wooden Holdredge and Fairchild block (which escaped the flames) and then the village hall.

An explosion which blew out the sides of the bank building added to the difficulties of the volunteer firemen and at one time it was feared that the blaze would get beyond control. An appeal for help was sent to Cooperstown and the good people of that village responded handsomely—150 of them—with fire apparatus. They came to Oneonta on a special train.

For some time there had been agitation for a new municipal building and the fire offered an opportunity for irrevocable action in that direction. It is true that the wooden block next door, housing the merchant tailor shop of Jonah Holdredge and the offices and printing plant of the Oneonta Herald, a weekly publication, did not burn but if it had, the Fire House would probably have gone and it would have been difficult to save the Westcott block with its many tenants.

The village trustees, headed by President Joseph S. Lunn, later to become mayor, met in an emergency morning session and ordered the demolition of the village hall. The building was emptied and torn down in record time by hordes of eager citizens. That assured the success of the proposal to spend \$50,000 for a new structure.

The new building was soon started and was already occupied when Oneonta became a city on January 1, 1909.

The quadrennial madness of presidential elections has been with us a long time but its manifestations have changed considerably through the years. In days gone by there was much more active partisanship among the voters and much more audience participation in the events of the campaigns. Even the smallest communities got in on the show.

Let's go back to the presidential year of 1844 and see what happened in Oneonta when the Democratic partisans of James K. Polk and those who carried the Whig banner of that hardy perennial, Henry Clay, did their politicking.

Oneonta was in that year a sleepy hamlet of but a few hundred people. There were but six streets. It would appear that the busiest places in town were the Oneonta House on the west corner of Main and Chestnut (which extended only to Main), E. R. Ford's store, standing where the bus terminal is now, and the distillery, located back of where Enders now is on Broad Street and reached by a lane winding down the hill just west of the Ford Store.

The political rallies, usually held by both parties on the same day, took place where Chestnut touched Main. The Democrats had a tall hickory Liberty Pole where Molinari's store now is and the Whigs held forth around a towering white ash pole in front of the Oneonta House. The speakers would stand in front of these poles and let go with both barrels.

John Smith, an ardent Democrat, had a grocery store near the corner and on rally days would distribute candy and nuts to the kids with instructions to whoop it up for Polk. When the goodies were gone, the urchins would repair to the nearby store of Oliver Dickson, a Whig, and for value received start yelling for Clay. Smith disappeared between two days and it was said that his political largesse had caused his financial ruin.

Following the speeches there would be a wrestling match between Charles Manley and one of the Huftalens from the Hollow. That over, the Democrats and Whigs, good friends by now and drinking out of the same jug, would hurry to Bronson's Lane (now Maple Street) to watch a horse race, usually between Abram Houghtaling's "Old Indian" and Nicholas Alger's "Little Gray."

By now the sun would be setting and all who wished (and they would be many) would go to the Oneonta House, McDonald's Tavern or the Walling Inn (where the United Presbyterian Church now stands) for some serious drinking. If the Murphy boys (descendants of Indian Fighter Tim) were in town a brawl would ensue. The frequency of these encounters gave the town the nickname of "Klipnockie," which persists to this day.

## *RAILROAD COMES TO TOWN*

Probably the greatest day in Oneonta history was August 29, 1865, the day the railroad came to town. Not only was the occurrence one of vast potential for the fledgling village but the celebration itself measured up fully to the importance of the occasion.

For years a group of Oneonta citizens, headed by E. R. Ford, Harvey Baker, Jared Goodyear and Col. W. W. Snow, had worked unceasingly for a railroad down the valley. Now the rails had been laid as far as Oneonta and traffic was to open formally on the Albany and Susquehanna Railroad between here and the capital city.

The fateful day opened with a beautiful morning and soon every road to the village was clogged with people afoot, on horseback and in carriages. Extensive preparations had been made. Practically every building in town was decorated with flags and dozens of arches covered with flowers and bunting spanned the streets.

These arches, under construction for weeks, displayed such mottoes as: Friends of Our Enterprise, Welcome; Isolation Obliterated; The Hudson and Susquehanna United; Governor Fenton, Our Railroad Friend; The Directors; Labor Omnia Vincit.

About noon the excursion train from Albany arrived, bringing its addition to what was already the largest crowd the village had ever seen. Among the visitors were many prominent state and railroad officials. The train was met at the station by four companies of Col. Dunbar's 41st regiment of State Militia, headed by Major General S. S. Burnside and staff.

The guests were escorted to the Oneonta House and the Susquehanna House, standing on opposite corners of Chestnut and Main Streets, where they were dined and, presumably, wined by a reception committee consisting of E. R. Ford, L. L. Bundy, John M. Ferrell, D. M. Miller, Col. W. W. Snow, D. J. Yager and Timothy Sabin.

Early in the afternoon the company repaired to the First Baptist Church yard. The Baptist Church, now the Lutheran Church on Grove Street, stood on the brow of the hill back of the old Salvation Army Hall. Between it and Main Street, which it faced, was an area of some size.

L. L. Bundy was master of ceremonies, introducing the following speakers: Governor Reuben Fenton, Lieut. Gov. Alvord, President J. H. Ramsey of the railroad, Judge Gould, William Steuart, George A. Starkweather and P. P. Rogers.

At four o'clock the train left Oneonta for the return trip to Albany amid cheers, the booming of cannon, the music of bands and the waving of handkerchiefs in the hands of the fairer sex.

It was indeed a day to be remembered.



## OUR ETHNIC LOOK

As is the case with most American cities the ethnic character of Oneonta has changed considerably through the years. The poll lists of 100 years ago show names almost 100 per cent Anglo-Saxon and Germanic in origin. And 50 years later, in 1910, the city directory indicates very little change.

The 1960 directory, however, lists names of many different origins, indicating that the mixture of races which has helped make America great is working its magic in our pleasant community.

The first white men to make this their permanent abode were for the most part Palatinate Germans from the Mohawk and Schoharie valleys. There were a few Holland Dutch and a sprinkling of English, Irish and Scots but the Germans were in the majority and for some years German was the language of conversation in the settlement.

About the second decade of the 19th century came the great Yankee invasion of peoples of predominately British stock. Their ancestors had settled New England and had been steadily inching westward since the middle of the 17th century.

The jump to this section was generally made from the Hudson River counties. Some had gone down the Susquehanna with Clinton during the Revolution and had liked the country so well that they returned to it when it was opened for settlement. Last came the influx of peoples from eastern and southern Europe and the Near East.

A study of the names in the 1910 directory discloses some interesting facts. Names are not an absolute clue to racial origin since they have a way of changing through the years and sometimes are replaced by entirely different ones in the flash of a judge's pen. However, the method is accurate enough for our purpose.

A very large proportion of the names in the 1910 directory are of English, Scottish, Irish and German origin. There are few Scandinavian names. Although Farone, Molinari and Chicorelli have been familiar names in Oneonta for a generation there were comparatively few Italian families in Oneonta in 1910. Less than 30 names are apparently Italian. Only about 15 are of Slavic and Near Eastern origin.

The 1960 directory tells a far different story. The names indicate that within our boundaries are to be found peoples whose origins were in every part of the globe. Quite possibly the Anglo-Saxon and Germanic names are now in the minority. One fact remains, however. Oneonta is still over 90 per cent native born American, one of the highest percentages in the state.

All of which proves nothing, except that Oneonta has followed the population pattern of most American cities of its size, economic condition and geographical situation.

## THE SWAMPS OF OLD

If the bullfrogs, water snakes and other aquatic creatures which once inhabited these parts in such infinite numbers could return from wherever they have been during the past 100 years, they just wouldn't know the old home town.

Gone are their former haunts — swamps filled with stumps, swamp grass and water which once covered a good share of the present business section, most of the railroad area and portions of the residential section.

The largest of these quagmires extended from the bluff east of the railroad shops westward for a mile and a half almost to the Plains. This contained about 100 acres, two-thirds of it within the corporate limits. This land was drained when the railroad went through.

Another strip of swampland reached from near Main Street over the areas now covered by London and Burnside Avenues and Ann, Meckley, Baker and other streets in that vicinity. The portion of River Street through the swamp was a corduroy road.

Still another large swamp began about where the viaduct now is, curving around the high ground upon which Main Street was built to the Riverside Cemetery hill and stretching south almost to the river. This covered the area now occupied by Market Street, the old railroad station and freight house, South Main and Broad Street up to about the Bern Furniture building.

This swamp was drained about 1865 when E. R. Ford opened Broad Street through his lands and Harvey Baker cut Market Street (then Mechanic) through property which he owned.

Marshy land once began where the Eagles Club now is and extended northeasterly across Chestnut and Dietz Streets to about the end of Huntington Park and the city parking lot across the street. The building sites on the north side of Main Street from Chestnut east to just beyond the Hotel Oneonta were on the southern edge of this swamp.

The area starting at West Street and extending southeast over the ground now occupied by the WDOS and Star buildings to beyond High and Franklin Streets was once a swamp but was drained early in the village's history.

An area on the old Ford farm north of Center Street was swampy. This was apparently difficult to drain and there were wet spots around Myrtle Avenue and environs within the memory of older residents.

Large springs abounded in the area now covered by the city and were responsible for the swampy conditions. Once man put his mind to the confining of these springs and the diversion of their waters, the drainage problem was solved.

There is considerable fine sand underlying the area. Its presence, plus the abundant water, inevitably led to creation of pockets of quicksand which have given excavators in the business section considerable difficulty.

## OLD TIME BASEBALL

"On Sunday a gang of fifteen or twenty young men indulged in a ball game on the flats south of the gas works. Ballplaying on the Sabbath has become quite common in this village and it is about time a quietus is put upon it."

A lot of baseball (much of it on Sunday) has been played in Oneonta since this 1882 editorial blast. This is a baseball town from way back. Spreading early from its Cooperstown birthplace, the game soon became a vital sport in the village. During the old, old days Oneonta had strong amateur nines and in the '90s an entry in the pro State League.

In the early years of the present century the match games were played on the Fair Grounds. If your hair is gray you may remember Bill Abbott and Pop Merritt and the Blue Label team. In 1905 the Elm Park diamond (now Neahwa Park) was opened. Do you recall that 16 inning 1 to 1 tie that Wally Burke pitched against the Cuban Giants?

In the 'teen years there were teams in most of the surrounding communities composed of college boys earning a little vacation cash. Richfield had a team from Williams (including Ray Chapman, later, while with Cleveland, to be killed by a Carl Mays' pitch). Stamford drew from Syracuse and Holy Cross, and Oneonta relied upon the talent of Brown University. Those were the days of Art Staff, Walt Snell, McGurty, Conzelman and the Nash brothers, Reggie and Ken.

During the '20s came the strong teams backed by Duffer Weidman, Dutch Damaschke and Doc Marx. There were names to conjure with in those days: Joe Scanlon, Tommy Wilcox, Sam McKean and Jimmy Boylan; Fred Sinstack, Ab Herman, Dewey Steffen, Swat Byrnes and Doc Farrell. Also there were Ownie Carroll, Lou Ferry, Georgie Baird, McAuliffe, Eckstein and Alexander.

During that period we had the big name managers: Ed Walsh, one of the game's immortal pitchers; Al Bridwell, Giant shortstop who made the hit that started the famous Fred Merkle "bonehead play"; Roy Thomas, who played in the same Athletic outfield as Zane Gray.

During those days Oneonta played many big league teams and didn't fare too badly, either. The fences were 30 feet back of where they are today, giving a playing area larger than in most big league parks. Many of baseball's immortals, among them Babe Ruth and Rogers Hornsby, hit only long outs trying to reach those far fences. Hornsby once told us that the Oneonta park was the best he had played in outside of the big leagues.

Then came the unforgettable days of the Canadian-American League, too close in time to need much recalling. Oneonta, the smallest city in the country in Class C baseball, received a great deal of national publicity in those days. Many Sox players went up to the big time. Frankie Malzone, Ike DeLock, Dale Long, and Ken Aspromonte are still there.



## CENTRAL HOTEL FIRE

The year 1910 had a fiery beginning in Oneonta and bowed out in the same manner. In that year were two of the worst fires in the community's history.

On January 16 the Central Hotel block burned with the loss of three lives and on December 23 the Morris Brothers feed mill and adjacent buildings on Market Street were destroyed by fire.

The Central Hotel block occupied the site now covered by the Hotel Oneonta building and housed, in addition to the hotel in its central and eastern portions, the First National Bank, Herrieff's Clothes Shop, the National Express Company and Ingerham's Barber Shop. On the upper floors hotel rooms occupied the entire structure.

The hotel section was a brick veneer structure built by Alfred C. Lewis in 1873. Two years later Mr. Lewis added a solid brick building extending to Dietz Street. At the time of the fire the hotel business was conducted by L. C. Millard and son, Jesse A.

The fire, which started in the boiler room, was discovered by Night Clerk Evans at 3:15 on Sunday morning, January 16. The fire department, which consisted of four paid men and 30 call men, responded at once but the fire had spread rapidly. The fire doors between the two sections were open (it was before the day of automatic closing devices) and the whole interior was soon ablaze.

Below zero temperature hampered the firemen and made the night one of horror for the 54 registered guests who, plus the hotel employes living in, were forced to flee in their night clothing.

A few got out through the regular exits, many slid down ropes while others were evacuated by ladder. There was a narrow alley between the hotel and the building to the east with a covered bridge connecting the second stories. Some escaped through this.

Jacob Hedlinger, a hotel employe, perished in his efforts to save the guests. Four days later the bodies of George Conklin and Edwin Emerson were found frozen in blocks of ice in a second floor room on the far Dietz Street corner.

The brick veneer section was in complete ruins by morning while only sections of the outer walls were left of the solid brick portion.

Except for what could be salvaged in the early stages of the fire, the business places suffered almost complete losses. The Lewis building to the east caught fire several times and its tenants, the grocery store of C. H. Borst and the Packer and Sherman furniture store and undertaking parlor, sustained heavy damage.

The Exchange block to the rear, housing the Post Office, was threatened continually and the postal workers moved out all equipment soon after the fire started.

## LOOMIS J. CAMPBELL

The man who gave us the word "appendicitis", as well as hundreds of other now much used terms, was a native Oneontan, Loomis J. Campbell. As editor of Webster's Dictionary he authorized the inclusion of this word in the 1890 revision accurately to describe a disease then known vaguely as "inflammation of the bowels."

But Oneonta's most noted scholar did not derive his world wide fame solely from his work on the dictionary. He edited the famous Farmer's Almanac, wrote a widely sold history of the United States and issued a series of elementary textbooks which sold in the millions.

Loomis J. Campbell was born in 1835 in a house on the site of Glenwood Cemetery. Dr. Joseph Lindsay, Oneonta's first physician, was his maternal grandfather. He got his elementary education under Nathaniel Bull and finished his preparatory work at Delaware Literary Institute, Franklin. He was graduated from Hamilton College in 1856, the first Oneontan to receive a collegiate degree.

After a two year teaching stint at Oneida, Campbell went to Boston, where his activities centered for many years. For some time he was on the staff of Worcester's Dictionary, a rival of the Webster.

During that period he wrote Campbell's History of the United States, first published in 1870 and reprinted several times. He assisted in the preparation of Hilliard's Readers and then launched his own series of spellers, readers, histories, books of synonyms and other teaching manuals.

His school books were immensely popular, the Franklin Readers being the leading texts of their kind for over two decades. Although Campbell's royalty was only a half a cent a copy, in 1895 he received from this source \$6,000, representing a sale of nearly a million and a quarter copies.

Loomis Campbell also catalogued the Boston Public Library and for 15 years was editor of the Farmer's Almanac, a publication which New Englanders revered next to the Bible. It is still published and in good demand.

G. & C. Merriam, publishers of Webster's Dictionary, were attracted by his work and invited him to supervise the 1890 edition, a work which made Webster's the international authority on English spelling, pronunciation and usage. He remained with Webster's until his death.

To Campbell Oneonta was always home. Much of his work was done at his residence on West Street, just beyond the present entrance to Hartwick College. Dudley Campbell, who published in 1905 the only history of Oneonta ever written, was a brother.

Loomis Campbell, world renowned editor, author and philologist, died in Oneonta in 1896 and was buried in Glenwood Cemetery near where he was born.

## FLOODS OF THE PAST

The flood which hit the low lying sections of the city in the spring of 1960 was mild in comparison with the freshets of olden days, which changed the course of the river and tributary streams and carried away tons of top soil.

The first flood of record was the "Pumpkin Freshet" of 1794, so called because it ravaged the numerous corn fields along the river and carried thousands of pumpkins downstream as far as Windsor.

The great flood in the summer of 1816 changed the course of both the Susquehanna River and Oneonta Creek. Prior to then the river flowed close to the bluff upon which Division, Grand and Prospect Streets rest. At about where the coal shed was until recently, the stream turned abruptly south, ran past the old gas works and ball park sites and found its present channel near the Park Board workshed.

Rain fell in torrents on the Oneonta Creek watershed and caused the stream to rise rapidly. In those days the creek flowed several rods east of its present bed. The land to the south and east of Main Street was high except where the creek pierced it.

The rampaging stream washed hundreds of tons of gravel from these high lands and deposited it in the river, blocking the old channel completely and causing a change of course. The creek worked its way several rods to the west during the flood.

The raceway which fed the McDonald mills (now Elmore Milling Co.) led out of the river about where the Gas Avenue crossing now is. After the flood it was necessary to extend the raceway to the new river channel and to build a dam there. The changed course pleased the up-river lumbermen, however. It had been difficult to run even small rafts around the abrupt turn.

The next bad flood was in 1842 when Oneonta Creek again washed away quantities of top soil and changed its course to about its present location. The river reached its highest level in recorded history at that time. Harvey Baker wrote: "The water extended like one vast sea from the bank south of Main Street to the south side opposite. A little land where the gas works stands was the only bare ground between the mill dam above and Swart's eddy below us."

Silver Creek, now a harmless stream rising on upper West Street and flowing through the city to the millrace, caused much damage within the memory of many present day Oneontans.

The underpasses at Church and Dietz Streets would clog with ice or debris, sending torrents of water down Dietz Street and Ford Avenue and thence down South Main and Broad Streets.

During the days of the WPA the creek channels were deepened and walled so that now there is little likelihood of trouble. Old Man River is still untamed, however, and carries a dangerous potential.



## SPANISH WAR DAYS

Dawn was breaking as the blue clad column swung down Main Street behind the Star Fife and Drum Corps. Despite the hour, lights blazed from every window and the sidewalks were thronged with people.

As the column passed the store now occupied by Brackett's, John Laskaris turned from arranging a fruit stand and waved. It was to be his first day of business in Oneonta.

It was May 2, 1898, and the Third Separate Company was on its way to the Spanish-American War. Of the 112 officers and men who boarded the special train that morning but nine are still living and but two, Stanley E. Bartow and Sherman J. Stone, reside in Oneonta.

It is doubtful if many of the men had any sleep that night for during the evening they and the members of the GAR had been entertained at the Oneonta Club at the corner of Dietz Street and Reynolds Avenue (now the Lewis Funeral Home). At 2:15 a.m. the fire bell had summoned them to assemble at the Armory.

The company went first to Camp Black on Long Island where on May 20 it was sworn into federal service as Co. G, 1st New York Volunteer Infantry. Major Walter Scott of Oneonta commanded the battalion and the company officers were: Captain U. A. Ferguson, First Lieutenant H. A. Tucker, Second Lieutenant F. W. Boardman, First Sergeant F. M. H. Jackson and Quartermaster Sergeant Frank L. Olin.

On July 7 the unit entrained at Jersey City for the Presidio, San Francisco, and on August 18 sailed with three other companies for Hawaii on a wooden vessel built as a lumber boat. Nine days later the outfit reached Honolulu and pitched its tents at Camp McKinley between Diamond Head and Waikiki Beach.

Although it was rumored that it would be sent to the Philippines, the company remained in Hawaii until early December when it sailed for home.

The men arrived in Oneonta on December 26 and were mustered out here. Four of the men who had left Oneonta seven months before never saw home again, dying of disease en route or in Hawaii. They were Burton Woodbeck, G. L. Peet, John V. Springsteen and Charles F. Carter. The last two were Normal students, of whom there were about a dozen in the company.

The nine living members of the unit are Thomas P. Smith, Elmer R. Ferris, William Thornburn, Dewitt Tallmadge, Fred Fleming, John N. Conant, H. A. Hamilton, Sherman J. Stone and Stanley E. Bartow. Three men, Frank F. Klipfert, Frank V. Riley and S. J. Turp are presumed dead since they have not been heard from in years.

## ELIAKIM REED FORD

Almost from the day he came to Oneonta in 1822 until he died in 1873 Eliakim Reed Ford "ran" the town. It was not that he was a dictator by nature but his talents were so varied, his interest in the growth of the community so intense and his labors so great that power and influence came to him naturally.

Merchant, farmer, landowner, justice of the peace, supervisor and first president of the village—E. R. Ford was for years Oneonta's leading citizen and one of the best known and most respected men in the valley.

E. R. Ford was born November 9, 1797, at Westerlo, Albany County. He left home as a boy and went to live with his uncle, Eliakim Reed, a merchant in Greenville, Greene County. In 1822 he came to Oneonta with a capital of \$500 and opened a general store on the corner where the Main Street Baptist Church now stands.

A year and a half later he moved to the corner of Main and Chestnut Streets where the Stanton block now is and in 1829 to the northwest corner of Main and River Streets. In 1840 he built a stone store on the site of the bus terminal and a stone mansion where the Wilber Bank now stands. For years the latter was the most pretentious dwelling for miles around and a landmark in the valley for years.

In those days the trader had to finance himself and trust every settler for miles around for the necessities of life, depending upon promises to pay from the products of trees not yet cut and crops not yet planted.

Once a year Ford went to New York, often a good share of the way on foot, to purchase goods which had to be transported back by wagon over roads scarcely deserving the name.

Perhaps it was this circumstance that made Ford such an ardent backer of the Charlotte Turnpike and such a hard worker for the railroad, which probably could not have been built without his aid.

E. R. Ford was also a farmer, with land extending from Dietz Street to Maple and from the river to the present SUCO campus. Ford Avenue and Broad, South Main, Elm and parts of Center and Walnut Streets were opened through his property.

Too old himself for service, he gave two sons to the Union forces during the Civil War and labored mightily on the home front.

In 1823 he married Harriet Emmons, daughter of another pioneer Oneonta family. Of his eight surviving children, six were prominent residents of the community for many years: Dewitt, Sylvester, Clinton, and E. R. Ford, Jr., Mrs. Jane Saunders and Mrs. Timothy D. Watkins.

## THE FIRE WAGONS ROLL

It has been quite a spell since Pat, on his first visit to the big town, leaned from a window of the Central Hotel and watched the Colonel Snow steamer streak along Main Street beneath him, horses straining at their collars and smoke and sparks streaming from the boiler top.

"They're moving Hades," said Pat. "One load's gone by already."

Kids get a kick today watching the fire trucks weave in and out of traffic, their sirens blasting. But gone is the thrill that came when the wagons went down the street in the old days with the horses at a gallop, their hoofs striking sparks from the brick pavement, the driver leaning far over the dashboard and firemen clinging desperately to the lurching vehicle.

When Oneonta became a city in 1909 the horse was still king of short haul transportation. A pair of trained horses was kept in stalls in the apparatus room. The harness was on a pulley arrangement in front of the wagon. When an alarm sounded the stall chains dropped and the animals took their places under the harness.

A pull and the harness would drop onto the horses' backs. A few snaps to fasten and the truck was ready to go.

Rehearsals were held at 1 and 8 p.m. and never failed to draw a crowd of citizens who hurried their meals so as to be on hand when the bell sounded.

The Colonel W. W. Snow steamer was kept in the rear of the room and was connected by a pipe to a stove in the basement so that there would always be hot water in the boiler. Materials for a fire were kept in the firebox.

The steamer horses were housed in the basement and reached the apparatus floor via a ramp where the department office is now. When an alarm sounded they were led up the ramp and hitched to the steamer, the pipe was disconnected and the vehicle rolled. As it cleared the door Fireman Driggs threw a torch into the firebox. The chimney belched fire and smoke almost immediately. If the fire was at any distance, a full head of steam was up on arrival.

Old timers will tell you that the steamer could outpump any of the modern machines. However, there were disadvantages. If the fire occurred in the daytime, the steamer was pretty apt to be late. Whereas the horses for the hose truck were always in the building, the steamer pair was working on village business during the day and by the time driver Al Sisum could get them to the station and then to the fire much time might elapse.

In any event, when they galloped down the main drag with the fire spitting monster at their heels it was, as Pat remarked, a hell of a sight.



## THE HORSE CARS

"All aboard for Wilber Park. See the deer, bear and other animals."

Back in the days of the Oneonta Street Railway this publicity pitch was shouted by the conductors as the horse drawn cars passed up and down Main Street.

The Wilber Park referred to was in the small gorge at the end of Park Street about where the residence of Duncan Briggs now stands. This area, within easy walking distance of the end of the car line, was equipped with picnic tables and had a small menagerie which made it a popular resort during the summer months.

Employees of the Wilber Bank were sometimes used to ballyhoo the park attractions. On one occasion a well known bank clerk altered the standard slogan by adding: "... and Pa's monument," alluding to the life size memorial statue of David Wilber which stood on an eminence in Glenwood Cemetery within clear view of the park. This young man was soon a former bank clerk.

The company which operated the horse railroad was organized early in 1888 with a capital stock of \$20,000, half of which was held by the Wilber family. George I. Wilber supervised the operation of the road.

The rails were laid during June and July and ran from the then village line at East End down Main to Chestnut and along that street to Fonda Avenue, a distance of two and a quarter miles. The car barns were at the corner of Reynolds Street where the gas station now is.

About \$16,000 was spent upon the line and equipment, which included three closed cars built by Lewis and Fowler of Brooklyn at a cost of \$800 each. Later an open car was added.

The first car was operated over the line on August 11, 1888. Cars were run on a 16 minute headway and were manned by a driver and a conductor. Records indicate a daily take of from \$25 to \$50, quite a sizable gross for those days. Tickets were 5 cents each, 6 for 25c and 25 for a dollar.

Many humorous incidents concerning the line have been related. One concerns a small boy who asked his dad for a dime for a round trip. The shrewd father gave his son a nickel, figuring that the conductor would not put a small boy off the car for lack of five cents. However, hard hearted Harry, or whatever his name was, did just that and the lad was obliged to walk home from East End. The car was late that trip. The urchin trudged slowly down the center of the track, refusing to make way for the horses behind him.

There were also somber incidents. The cars were frequently chartered to carry funeral parties to Riverside and Glenwood cemeteries.

The horse cars made their last run in 1896 and the next year the line was electrified. But that is another story.

## HENRY E. HUNTINGTON

Henry E. Huntington was once asked by a reporter to name his favorite hobby. The fabulously rich railroad magnate and art connoisseur replied: "Oneonta".

This internationally known figure never forgot the community where he was born and grew to manhood. His private car was called "Oneonta" and carried the name of the city into every corner of the United States. Mention of the name was an open sesame to his presence at any time.

In 1919 he gave the family home and considerable land to Oneonta, and Huntington Memorial Library and Park stand as perpetual reminders of the love which he bore his parents and his native village.

Solon and Collis P. Huntington, brothers, came to Oneonta from Connecticut in 1842 and established a mercantile business. Lured by tales of unlimited gold, Collis went West in '49 and ended up as the builder of the Union Pacific railroad and the founder of one of the country's largest fortunes.

Solon remained in Oneonta, married Harriet Saunders of Albany and on February 27, 1850, became the father of Henry Edwards Huntington. Henry was educated in the schools of Oneonta. At the age of 20, after a brief stint in a hardware store here, he went with a wholesale concern in New York.

Henry Huntington climbed rapidly up the ladder of business success and, his talents coming to the attention of his uncle, Collis P., the latter took him into his railroad empire. By the time Collis P. died in 1900, Henry was vice-president of the Southern Pacific and had amassed a fortune of his own. At one time he was a director in 40 railroad companies.

He was bequeathed a large portion of his uncle's vast estate and set to work on his plans for the development of southern California. He bought tens of thousands of acres of land and created a system of interurban railroads valued at \$100 million. No man was more responsible for the development of the Los Angeles region than Henry E. Huntington.

During the latter years of his life Mr. Huntington's chief occupation was the building up of his magnificent library and art collection. The world renowned Huntington Library, now housed in his former mansion at San Marino, contains one of the finest collections of English literature and Americana extant, including the famous Gutenberg Bible and many manuscripts and letters of his heroes, Abraham Lincoln and Robert E. Lee.

The art treasures include Gainsborough's "Blue Boy" for which he paid over a million dollars.

Henry E. Huntington was planning another trip to Oneonta when he died in Philadelphia on May 24, 1927.

## THE ONEONTA FAIR

"A loaf of bread, a pound of meat and all the mustard you can eat for only a nickle, a half a dime, one twentieth of a dollar."

This huckster's pitch is heard no more in Oneonta. One reason is that the Central New York Fair, which made golden and glorious the September morns, noons and eves of yesteryear, long since went into the limbo of institutions gone but not forgotten.

The Oneonta Fair, which was second in size and importance only to the State Fair at Syracuse, was held on the area now occupied by Belmont Circle and the west end of Hudson Street. No old timer who goes into this section and views the visible traces of the old grandstand can help but think back to the days when 10,000 was an average day's crowd and as many as 30,000 people used to pack the grounds on special days.

The Oneonta Union Agricultural Society, which ran the Fair, was organized in 1872 with Allen Scramling as the first president. Work was started that year on the grounds, once a part of the Couse farm, and the first exhibition was held in 1874. Walter L. Brown and George I. Wilber were for years the Fair's guiding spirits. The last Fair was held in 1926, after which the property was bought by D. F. Keyes and cut up into building lots.

The Oneonta Fair was always held the week following the State Fair and drew many of the exhibits, race horses and entertainment features from there.

Not only was the Fair the event of the year for residents of Otsego and surrounding counties but railroad excursions were run from Albany, Troy, Schenectady, Kingston, Binghamton and Scranton, bringing thousands of people from those cities and places along the routes.

Memories cluster thick about any mention of the Fair . . . the Floral Parade with dozens of flower decorated entries . . . the trotting and pacing races on the half mile track . . . Herman with his candy slabs and popcorn balls . . . the crowds around the inflating (hot air) balloon and the cry that went up when the aerialist left the ground clinging to the trapeze below the parachute . . .

The children for whom the Fair meant two afternoons out of school . . . the dirigibles and crude airplanes circling the grounds . . . the open cars on the trolley line which ran from Main Street down Tilton Avenue and Fair Street to the grounds.

All the activity was not confined to the grounds. During Fair week the downtown streets were packed from early morning until late at night. The hotels, restaurants and stores were crowded and pitchmen barked their wares on every street corner.

For years Charles K. Champlin and his repertory company played the Oneonta theatre each Fair week, serving up warmed over Broadway plays to capacity crowds of town and country folk.



## NORMAL SCHOOL FIRE

"A thrill of terror ran through this whole community yesterday when the fire alarm at 5:20 gave the startling news that the beautiful Normal school building, the pride of the town, was on fire.

"Nearly everyone was frantic. Anxious faces were seen hurrying to and fro and anxious voices were seeking to learn the truth of the report which they hoped against hope was false. But, alas! the report was too true."

This contemporary account gives a good idea of how Oneontans felt on February 14, 1894, when the Oneonta State Normal School, only five years old, was completely destroyed by fire.

Gone were the fine library, the already famous scientific collections, and gone, they feared, were their hopes for the institution's future.

It was a wild winter's day with a stiff west wind filling the streets with almost impassable snowdrifts. The fire, which started in a storage space adjoining the basement boiler room, had gained little headway when the alarm was turned in from the box at the corner of Elm and Center Streets.

The volunteer firemen, however, mistook the location of the alarm, started for Cherry Street and were on Church before the mistake was discovered.

It was a long, slow pull for the fire wagons through the drifted streets and by the time the apparatus reached Normal hill there was a conflagration instead of a small blaze to contend with.

Some hydrants were frozen and there was insufficient pressure to get a stream on the fire. By the time the steamer arrived at 6 o'clock the fire was out of control.

By mid-evening only portions of the walls were standing. All of the contents, including the Yager collection of Indian artifacts and the Hurst collection of animals and birds, were destroyed. Fortunately, Principal J. M. Milne had duplicates of the scholastic records in his Windsor Hotel rooms and one of the teachers had a duplicate cash balance sheet.

The fire was on Thursday. On Friday afternoon the students met in the Metropolitan Theatre on Dietz Street (where Huntington Park now is) and Dr. Milne announced that classes would resume on Monday in the old Armory and in the Stanton Opera House at the corner of Main and Chestnut Streets.

Fears that the school might not be rebuilt were unfounded. The townspeople had wisely insured the building for \$75,000. Within days the legislature authorized plans for a new structure and added \$100,000 to the insurance money.

Work on the new building, slightly larger but almost a duplicate in appearance of the old school, was started on April 9 by a local firm, Lewis and Wilson, and by September the building was ready for partial occupancy.

## *DAYS OF THE BIKE*

Traffic problems did not begin with the motor car. Long before the first automobile appeared in Oneonta (1900) the minions of the law were having their troubles keeping the village thoroughfares safe for travel.

First there was the sport who persisted in driving his high stepper at speeds in excess of the six miles per hour legal limit for horse drawn vehicles.

And then there was the ubiquitous cyclist who just wouldn't abide by the law. He insisted on riding his infernal machine upon the sidewalks, in going out at night without a light on his bike and in failing to sound his bell when approaching a street intersection as duly provided for in village ordinances.

But worst of all was the "scorcher" who, drunk with the power generated by his churning legs, would zip along at dizzying speeds well over the 10 mile an hour limit.

With the development of the safety bicycle (both wheels of same size) about 1885 and the later invention of the coaster brake, the bicycle came into its own and reigned supreme in personal transportation for about 20 years.

The bicycle became big business with factories and repair shops dotting the country. During the 1890s a bicycle factory on Maple Street in Oneonta had a short and undistinguished career.

During the '90s two bicycle clubs flourished in Oneonta. The larger was the local chapter of the League of American Wheelmen.

This organization, with units in every state, did for the cyclist what the present day American Automobile Association does for the motorist. It worked for more bicycle paths beside the highways, put up directional and distance markers at cross roads and furnished maps and touring information.

The men most responsible for the success of this organization were Ralph P. Stoddard, F. M. H. Jackson, Frank A. Herrieff and George Bierhardt. Headquarters was at the Windsor Hotel, which gave a 25 per cent discount to League members.

The other bicycle club was the Oneonta Wheel Club, organized in 1893 to promote the sporting aspects of bicycling. George B. Baird was the first president of the group of about 50 members.

This club leased the ground constituting the upper level of Wilber Park and built a quarter mile dirt track at a cost of \$1,500 for grading and fencing. A wooden grandstand stood near where the pavilion now is.

At the grand opening of the Pine Grove Riding Park, 25 of the crack racers of the country were present. Not long after, Jenny of Utica set the world's unpaced half mile record of one minute and two seconds on the track.

## THE KNITTING MILLS

Does your child kick off his bed clothing at night? If so you should try to buy a Scatchard Sleeping Sack for Infants and Small Children. We say "try to buy" because you may find it difficult to secure the garment since it has not been manufactured for well over half a century.

On October 13, 1896, Mrs. E. E. Scatchard, wife of the proprietor of the Oneonta Knitting Mill, was granted a patent for an entirely new article of clothing, a sleeping sack for children. A contemporary report says:

"This article is designed to prevent children from kicking off the bed clothing at night. It consists of a bag made with a flap continuing from the back part of the bag, with an opening for the neck of the infant, and the flap being drawn over, leaves room for the arms to protrude through the sides.

"The sack is made with cotton batting inside, quilted or matted. It is the intention of Mr. Scatchard to manufacture these sacks in conjunction with his other business at the knitting mills. Besides going to the trade, he will probably employ several lady agents to canvass.

The Oneonta Knitting Mill was a considerable industry in the 1880s. The plant was located on West Broadway between the street and the railroad just to the left of the Fonda Avenue crossing.

In 1892 the firm employed about 100 operatives, both men and women, and turned out nearly a million pairs of men's, ladies' and misses' wool hosiery. The factory did not spin any yarn, performing only the processes of knitting and dyeing. Fast black and leather shades were the fashionable colors at the time.

The building was erected in 1887 by J. F. Burton of Oneonta and two outside promoters named Wombough and Hough. The latter was the inventor of a supposedly superior knitting machine which failed to live up to the claims made for it.

The business folded late in 1888 and early the next year the assets were bought by Messrs. Scatchard and Eddishaw of Kensington, near Philadelphia. The firm moved its business to Oneonta and Mr. Burton of the old concern became associated with it. In 1891 Mr. Scatchard bought out his partners and thereafter conducted the business alone.

Elmer Scatchard was the grandson of Joseph Scatchard who came to this country from Yorkshire, England, in 1842 and began the manufacture of woollen yarn near Philadelphia. The firm was at one time the largest manufacturer of woollen yarn in the United States.

Mr. Scatchard was fatally injured on May 25, 1899, when he was thrown from his bicycle as he was descending the steep Fonda Avenue hill. The mill ceased operations not long after his death.



## THOSE SILVER MINES

Is there silver in them thar hills across the river or has the time and money spent during the past 150 years to find it been poured into a bottomless pit of legend and longing?

There is silver there in minute quantities to be sure just as there is gold and lead and iron and just about every other element. If minerals were not pretty well distributed over the earth's surface, plant and animal life would be impossible.

Silver in paying quantities is quite another matter, however, and the chances are a thousand to one against its being found. The geology of our region just doesn't permit it. But that fact hasn't deterred the fortune hunters.

In Oneonta, just as in about every other community in the state, there has been a legend of lost silver and lead mines once worked by the Indians and many attempts have been made to find them. In 1883 a group of Oneontans filed mining claims on 300 acres on the farms of Amos Cook in Otego and John VanWoert and Samuel Richards in the town of Oneonta.

Al Hathaway, one of the promoters, made this statement: "There is no question but what we have struck a bonanza. This is the mine for which everyone has been looking. We have found a perfect Eldorado."

The record is silent as to what happened to this venture. Later that year three more claims were filed on 200 acres, mostly on the Wickham farm (now owned by Ray McDonald) on the back road to Otego. Starting near a small excavation made by prospectors in 1821, a group of men headed by J. B. Roberts and J. D. Bogart dug a shaft 40 or 50 feet into the hillside, the remains of which can still be seen.

Specimens were sent to several assayers who differed widely in their reports, the figures running from one dollar to \$199 per ton.

Charles S. Prosser, a Cornell chemist, visited the mine and made an assay of his own. His report was far from encouraging but the miners kept on digging until their small capital was exhausted.

Dr. Prosser ridiculed the \$199 per ton assay, stating that the report called the specimens carbonate of silver whereas this compound never occurs in nature. He said that all he could find were a few conglomerate rock fragments containing very small quantities of silver sulphide, galena (lead) and copper compounds. Specimens were analyzed several times in subsequent years but no silver was found.

Judging by all the available evidence it seems probable that what was found was a mineral bearing boulder brought in by the glacier. These glacial deposits are found in many parts of the state.

There might have been an Eldorado where the rocks came from but they were far from home in their final resting place in the Delaware hills.

## OLD MILL STREAM

Most American cities owe their location to a stream which was either used as a transportation artery or furnished power for the mills without which the wilderness could not have been conquered.

Oneonta is no exception but it was not the Susquehanna River, as one might suppose, but Silver Creek which determined the location of the embryo village.

Rising among the cold springs which abound in the upper reaches of West Street, Silver Creek (once called Elk Creek) flows through the heart of the city and empties into the mill race at the Gas Avenue crossing. It is now only a placid remnant of what was once a creek whose abundant and ice-free waters made it the pioneer mill stream in this region.

Prior to about 1865 the stream took a somewhat different course than at present. After it crossed Main Street near the present location of the Post Office it turned southwest. Crossing what is now Broad Street near the Bern Furniture store, it followed the foot of the bank upon which Main Street is built and when near the Wilson Hotel veered south, went around the end of Barn Hill and through a gorge about 10 feet deep. It pursued its way to the river, emptying some distance upstream from the present outlet of the mill race.

About 1780 Captain John Vanderwerker built a grist mill on the river about 50 rods southeast of the present Elmore mills. Anchor ice in the winter and floods in the spring doomed this enterprise to failure and Joseph McDonald bought the mill and moved it to the bank of Silver Creek near the present mill location.

James McDonald purchased the property from his brother in 1804. Joseph had converted it into a sawmill and James added a wool carding and cloth finishing mill a few rods downstream and a grist mill below that. Around "McDonald's Mills" the village made its start.

With the clearing of the land on the upper stretches of the creek, the water flow diminished and it was later found necessary to dig a raceway to the river, which then flowed under the Prospect Street bank and turned south near Gas Avenue. After the flood of 1816, which changed the river to its present course, another section of mill race and a new dam had to be built.

The land around the upper portion of the creek abounded in game in the old days and the creek was alive with trout. Lumbermen used to say that this region furnished the best pine timber ever rafted down the Susquehanna. Here lived the Babcocks, the Blends and the Morrells, the Campbells, the Yagers and the Giles, all pioneer families.

In the 1840s R. J. Emmons ran a grist mill and a distillery on the creek back of the Campbell homestead (near the Hartwick College entrance) and there was a sawmill on the present Clyde Craft farm above Homer Folks Hospital.

## EARLY TAVERNS

A century and a half ago this valley was practically a virgin wilderness. Pine and hemlock, oak and chestnut towered branch to branch from horizon to horizon. The forests teemed with game birds and animals. The river abounded with shad and the brooks were filled with trout.

Around McDonald's Mills and along the trail which is now Main Street were perhaps a dozen rude homes housing about 60 people. Along the paths which led through the wilderness were a few taverns for the accommodation of the travelers, who were increasing in number every year.

Let's survey the taverns around here in 1810, imagining that we are coming into the valley from the southeast along the trail from Davenport which became the Charlotte Turnpike. First, however, let's take a look at a typical wilderness inn.

The first taverns were of logs and were generally replaced with frame structures as sawmills were set up. The most prominent feature was a large common room with a huge fireplace to provide warmth and cheer. Opening from this was the dining room with the kitchen beyond. The sleeping quarters were in the loft.

There was no provision for vehicles, only travelers on foot or on horseback being expected. When the rooms were filled, the latecomers spread their blankets on the public room floor and slept there, feet to the fire.

Coming from the southeast the river was crossed at Young's Bridge, downstream about 100 rods from the present Emmons bridge. In a log house by the bridge was an inn built about 1798 by James Young, whose great-grandson, Vyrle Young, now lives nearby.

Next came another log tavern located 30 or 40 rods south of Glenwood Cemetery and built in 1801 by Benjamin Baltus Kimball. Then came the inn of Simeon Walling on the site of the United Presbyterian Church. Walling, a Revolutionary soldier, settled there about 1784. In 1808 the log inn was replaced by a frame tavern which was run by Simeon's son, Joseph, until the brick residence (first building of Hartwick College) was built in 1854.

The next tavern was two or three rods east of Chestnut and Main Streets and was conducted by one Schoolcraft until 1809. Then came the log tavern of Aaron Brink, situated near the present Elmore mill and opened in 1796 as the first tavern in that section. The McDonald house at the corner of Main and River (demolished in 1961) was built in 1810 but was not operated as a hotel until 1812.

Next down the valley was the tavern on the Plains, a portion of which still remains as a part of the structure known for years as the Pond Lily Hotel. This was built in 1789 and was first run by John and Erastus Cully. Since there was no sawmill near at the time, the lumber was probably rafted down the Susquehanna from Milford.



## AN INDIAN VILLAGE

The freshets in April of 1887 were unusually severe. The Slade flats on the south side of the juncture of the Susquehanna and Charlotte Rivers about two miles above Oneonta were covered with water for about a fortnight.

When the waters subsided Sherman Slade and his son John visited the flats to inspect the damage and were amazed to find the remains of an ancient Indian village, exposed when the current cut a gully two or three rods wide down to the clay subsoil.

In plain view were hundreds of arrow points and other artifacts as well as thousands of fragments of pottery. Several fireplaces of bedded cobbles were still in place, one of them containing pieces of charcoal.

Hundreds of these specimens were in the Willard Yager Indian collection which was destroyed in the Normal School fire. A few can still be seen in the museum now owned by Hartwick College and in private collections.

During the 1930s the site was excavated by Roland Hill, former Oneontan and an expert in this field. He concluded that the village was founded hundreds of years ago in an early Algonquin (or Algonkian) period. Artifacts of later periods indicate that several successive cultures lived there. Traces were also found of Iroquois occupation within historic times.

Years ago we spent many an hour sitting at the feet of Willard Yager and hearing him tell about the Indians of this region, especially those who lived in "the Castle" as he called the Slade flats site. We recall his saying that the village was old when Columbus discovered America and might well have been there when Christ was born.

When Mr. Yager died in 1929 he left several unfinished manuscripts, among them one which purported to be the diary of Johannes VanDyk of Leyden, Holland, who was supposed to have visited the village in 1634 and to have spent several months there. This treatise, excellently edited by Mr. Hill, was privately printed in 1953 under the title of *Orite of Adequentaga*.

In some 150 fascinating pages Mr. Yager discusses in detail life as it must have been lived in the village at that time. He describes how the long houses were built of sapling frames covered and roofed with bark and tells what the aborigines ate and wore and what they did for profit and pleasure.

In one sense the work is fantasy but it should be borne in mind that Willard Yager was a thorough scholar and that his delineation of the Indian life of the times was based upon careful and extended research into the customs of a people who were old in culture, however crude it might have been, during the days of the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome.

## MAIN STREET VIADUCT

The Main Street viaduct has been a part of the Oneonta scene so long that it seems incredible that for almost 40 years after the railroad was built pedestrians and vehicles had to use a grade crossing to get to "lower deck" and the country beyond.

It is difficult to visualize the lay of the land before the viaduct was built. Today Main Street slopes gradually from Chestnut down to Market Street where the slight upward pitch to the viaduct begins.

In the old days a much steeper decline began in front of the Eagles Club and the street ran all the way down hill to the tracks. Fairview Street was much steeper than at present and Market Street came into Main about on grade.

There were frequent near misses, several accidents and an occasional fatality on the crossing. Early in 1901 Supreme Court Justice Burr Mattice, who lived on the corner of Main and Luther Streets, suggested to the village trustees that an overhead crossing be erected.

The state Board of Railroad Commissioners was petitioned and after the necessary public hearings a final order was entered on September 11, 1901.

Ground was broken on December 30, 1902. The work was done by the Delaware and Hudson Company which let contracts for certain portions of the work to outside concerns. The original cost estimate was \$80,000, exclusive of land damages. These ran high, however, since extensive regrading had to be done by many landowners on Main, Market and Fairview Streets. The final cost was somewhat in excess of \$125,000.

During the construction the crossing was closed and a temporary one was built some rods to the east and leading to Market Street. This was opened on December 25 and was hence known as Christmas Street.

Two workmen were fatally injured on November 1, 1903, while one of the 65-ton girders was being raised into place. The men, "Red" Hurley, 35, of Albany and Charles Riley, 30, of Philadelphia were employes of one of the sub-contractors.

A plumb post, part of the "buck" which was used to raise the girders, snapped, throwing one of the men riding the girder to the ground. The other was struck by a piece of flying timber. Both died later in Fox Hospital.

The viaduct was opened to the public on August 15, 1904. There was no formal ceremony. A four horse tallyho, driven by Arthur Coy, took a number of village and railroad officials, including Village President Joseph Lunn, and George I. Wilber, resident D. & H. director, over the viaduct and back and the bridge was declared open to traffic. The first private conveyance to cross was a horse and buggy seating Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Coon.

One-half of the cost was borne by the railroad, one-quarter by the state and one-quarter by the village, which also had to pave the dirt approaches.

## HARVEY BAKER

Harvey Baker deserves the respect and gratitude of succeeding generations as much as any man who ever lived in Oneonta. Not only did he contribute tremendously to the growth of the village but he left behind him a volume of writings which have proved invaluable to historians of later times.

Mr. Baker was born in Lisle, Broome County, in 1818. Early in life he learned the trade of millwright and it was that occupation that brought him to Oneonta.

Early in 1841 he came up the river on horseback to sell a new type water wheel. Reaching Oneonta he stopped for the night at the McDonald tavern at the corner of Main and River Streets.

The town and its prospects looked good to him and he decided to make Oneonta his home. He purchased the property on the opposite corner of River Street from the tavern and built a house in which he resided until his death.

In 1842 he purchased a half interest in the McDonald mills, then run by Collier and Goodyear. He remained in this business until 1860 when he sold out to his partners, reserving the foundry and machine shop which he had built on the mill property. For some years he engaged in the building and repairing of mills and mill machinery, constructing or rebuilding 14 grist mills and 47 saw mills and installing water wheels in 33 others.

Mr. Baker was an extensive land holder, at one time owning all of the Market Street area. It was he who drained the swamps there, diverted Silver Creek to its present channel and laid out Market Street. He bought the John Youngman and David Orr farms on Southside and developed them.

He was very active in promoting the Albany and Susquehanna railroad, later the D.&H. He signed the charter application and was an original stockholder. During the first construction years he was general agent for the company, purchasing rights of way and ties and materials for fencing. Later, sensing trouble unless the big fills between East Worcester and Richmondville were first trestled, he secured approval of such action from the directors.

He supervised the construction of these trestles and later laid the rails from Cobleskill to Oneonta and did a large part of the grading. He was also instrumental in bringing the railroad shops here.

In 1853 Mr. Baker, together with John Westover of Richmondville, Jared Goodyear of Colliers and E. R. Ford of Oneonta, purchased extensive limestone lands at Howe's Cave. The Howe's Cave Lime and Cement Company was organized and for some years he was its president, secretary and general manager.

Despite his many activities Mr. Baker found time to write extensively of his life and times and his articles, which appeared in local journals, are a rich mine of historical fact.

Harvey Baker was seriously injured in an accident on the Main Street railroad grade crossing and never entirely recovered. He died on February 9, 1904, and was buried in Riverside Cemetery.



## HUNTINGTON LIBRARY

The Huntington Memorial Library has come a long way from its beginnings as a small collection of dusty volumes in the old wooden school on Academy Street.

With its nearly 40,000 books, its 7,000 patrons and a circulation pushing 100,000 volumes a year, the library stands second to none in communities of Oneonta's size.

Alva Seybolt can properly be called the father of the library. In 1888 this attorney was elected clerk of the Oneonta school district. He found that the school had almost nothing in the way of a library. Some 400 books, which had been accumulating since 1837 when the state started furnishing books to schools, were stored in a closet, unused by anyone.

Mr. Seybolt arranged the books and offered to visit the school each Friday afternoon to help the students select and borrow books. The arrangement was popular and the trustees were persuaded to buy more volumes. Soon a room was set aside for library purposes and Mary Phillips was engaged as librarian.

The library was incorporated in 1893 under the name of Oneonta Public Library and Albert Morris, John R. Skinner, W. A. E. Tompkins, Alva Seybolt and Andrew B. Saxton were named as the first trustees. By this time the number of books had grown to nearly 4,000.

Outgrowing its school quarters, the library was moved in 1895 to the Doyle & Smith block on Main Street. In 1904 it was moved to the ground floor of the Oneonta Theatre block and in 1909 to the Dr. A. D. Getman property on Ford Avenue which the city had purchased for \$6,000. This was later the Community House and the site is now part of the parking lot.

During these periods Julia Phillips, Mattie Cope, Ellen Hitchcock and Anna Woodin were librarians. In 1916 Mrs. Elizabeth Blackall was engaged. She was succeeded by Rosanna Bagg and she in turn by the present head librarian, Mrs. Melli-cent Epps, thus preserving the tradition of capable direction.

When Oneonta became a city in 1909 Mayor Albert Morris named to the Library Board Alva Seybolt, Arthur M. Curtis, George W. Fairchild, Andrew B. Saxton and Willard E. Yager.

In 1917 the Board received a letter from Henry E. Huntington expressing his desire to present the old family home on Chestnut Street to the city for use as a library. The only condition was that it be called Huntington Memorial Library in memory of his parents.

Mr. Huntington was more generous than he had suggested. He enlarged the home and remodeled it for library use, bought additional land and created Huntington Park and set aside a trust fund of \$200,000 for maintenance of the building and park. He also gave to the library several valuable paintings and a quantity of books from the renowned Huntington Library at San Marino, California.

## PIGSKIN WARRIORS

Back in 1904 Oneonta was a triple threat football town. There were teams at the High School, the YMCA and the Normal and if the same names appeared at times in all three lineups it must be remembered that eligibility rules were practically nonexistent at that time.

It would appear that the game was first played in Oneonta in 1904. YMCA Secretary Andrew Ceperley (later to be mayor) gathered a few boys together at the Fair Grounds and taught them the game. That first OHS squad consisted of Albert Getman, Charles Woodworth, Bert Hoye, Ivan Bush, Bruce Colburn, Carl Kellogg, John Carson, Harold Ford, Harry Parrish, E. Yost, I. Quimby, LeRoy Goodenough and Bert and Harry Smith.

The outfit doubled as the YMCA team and when the Normals needed men, helped out on the Hill. Apparently school attendance was not necessary. On one occasion Binghamton came to town with a loaded eleven and Oneonta countered by putting Red Slavin (not a student but big and strong) into uniform between halves and sending him on the field.

Another time a game was delayed until a freight train could come in and the fireman could put on his nose protector and shin guards. Apparently faculty members could play as there is a story to the effect that once the Normals imported a star lineman, made him an assistant professor of Greek and sent him forth to do or die for dear old ONS.

About 1908 or '09 the game was abandoned and was not revived until 1924. Only intrasquad games were played the first year but in 1925 five games were scheduled.

The team had fine spirit but was woefully inexperienced. None of the boys had ever played before and most had never seen a game. Norwich beat us 57 to 0 in the first game and Walton, 7 to 0. A scoreless tie with Hartwick Seminary was followed by the first OHS football victory of modern times, a 6 to 0 win over Cooperstown. There was a little strutting but the boys were cut down to size when Cooperstown took the rematch, 19 to 0.

That first squad, coached by Shorty Long and Al Risedorph, consisted of Dunc Briggs, Wes Hoffman, Art Edmunds and Bill Anderson, ends; John Johnson, Bob Simmons and Wilmer Bresee, guards; Harry Ditmore and Ed Keegan, tackles; Frank and Jim Puccio and Walt Crandall, centers; Captain Walt Keene, Cecil Fowlston, Francis Delaney, Joe Pondolfino, Ken Bates, Jim Imhoff and Sam Timko, backfield. Keene and Delaney alternated at quarter and half and Briggs played fullback on occasion.

Oneonta High has had good football years and bad but its overall record is a winning one. Under the present coaching of Lloyd Baker the spark of greatness kindled by Roy Kent has sprung into flame and the years ahead should be the best in the history of Oneonta High School football.

## FIRST ARMISTICE DAY

November 11, 1918, may not have been Oneonta's greatest day but it was certainly its wildest. VE and VJ Days in 1945 generated tremendous excitement in the city but they were mild compared with the original Armistice Day when for 24 hours Oneonta went more than slightly mad.

The news that Germany had capitulated on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month reached The Star at 3:45 a.m. The press was running and there were but two men in the editorial rooms. The run was stopped, help was summoned and a new front page prepared. At 4:50 the press started rolling again.

In the meantime the fire department and the D.&H. had been notified and the fire bell and all the church bells were ringing and the whistles of every engine in the yards had been tied down. Soon almost every building in the city was ablaze with light and the streets were filled with people. The Star notified every correspondent in its area and hundreds of outsiders started for Oneonta.

Small boys and big men collected boxes and crates, old wagons and miscellaneous lumber and piled it high in the middle of the Main and Broad Street intersection. The bonfire sent flames higher than the surrounding buildings. With its fuel constantly renewed, the fire burned for hours.

Very early Mayor Andrew Ceperley declared a holiday. The schools did not open and practically every store and office was closed.

Wherever a person with a musical instrument was available a parade started and there was one in progress somewhere most of the day. Kaiser Bill was hung in effigy a score of times. The Oneonta City Band was on the streets early and gave dozens of impromptu concerts during the day.

No citizen was more ardent in his enthusiasm than Dr. James C. Russell, beloved pastor of the First Presbyterian Church. He led several parades and gave a downtown speech in which he said: "At any rate we did a good job—we and our dauntless allies across the sea, and it will never have to be done again." This good man never knew how wrong his prophecy was.

During the afternoon there was a block dance on Grand Street. All day long Howard Fluhrer and Fred VanWie worked making arrangements for a giant parade which was held at 7 in the evening with 2,500 marchers and dozens of hastily prepared floats. The day's festivities culminated with a huge meeting at the Armory with an overflow crowd listening to speeches and patriotic music.

Ironically the issue of The Star which carried the news that the war was over, also had the latest casualty list, showing one Oneonta boy killed in action, one dead from wounds and two from disease. The war had been over for them for days; for thousands of others suffering from wounds and mental derangement it would not be over during their lifetimes.



## THANKSGIVING IN 1900

Thanksgiving Day in Oneonta at the turn of the century differed little in mode of celebration from the holiday we now observe each year. The times, however, bore little resemblance to the present and the village was quite a different place from the city of 1962.

1900 was an average year in the village, whose population had just been revealed as 7,147 by the census enumerators, Roscoe Briggs, A. H. Levinknight and Sperry Hall. The railroad was booming and the cigar making industry was at its peak with just one firm, Doyle & Smith, hand-rolling 10 million cigars a year.

The cornerstone of the Fox Memorial Hospital was laid in 1900 and plans were being made to replace the wooden block pavement on Main Street with brick. Shortly after Thanksgiving J. L. Bowdish brought to town a Locomobile, the first horseless carriage owned here.

You had probably prepared for the holiday by having C. C. Wallace cut your hair for 20 cents. On Thanksgiving morning you probably went to work as usual as most businesses were open until 10 o'clock or noon. The post office closed from noon until 7 p.m.

Many would attend the union service in the morning at the First Presbyterian Church. Rev. J. C. Russell conducted the service and was assisted by the Revs. H. C. McDermott, L. L. Greene, E. J. Farley, R. L. Welch and C. S. Pendleton.

Your Thanksgiving dinner would have varied little from that of 1962. Turkey would be the big dish. The bird would be stuffed with either oyster (25 cents a quart) or chestnut (free for the picking) dressing.

You would eat too much just as you will this year but bicarbonate of soda instead of Alka Seltzer would be the palliative.

After dinner, you probably went into the parlor and did some genteel gossiping or took a stereopticon trip to Niagara Falls or the Chicago World's Fair while munching ten cents worth (one pound) of Butterfield's chocolate drops.

Perhaps the family went out to dinner, eating at the Wilson House or at Rifembark's restaurant where for 25 cents you had your choice of turkey, chicken, ham, beef, pork or mutton, together with all of the conventional side dishes.

If you were alone, in a convivial mood, or perhaps short of eating money, you might have dropped into the Hathaway House bar, where with your five cent schooner of beer you washed down a free lunch of sliced turkey and other dainties.

In the evening, you might have gone to the Oneonta Theatre where "A Bachelor's Honeymoon" was playing. Fifty cents bought the best orchestra seat but if, for whatever reason, you wanted seclusion, another quarter would get you a curtained box seat.

It was 1900. William McKinley was in the White House, the dinner pail was full and all was right with the world.

## GEORGE I. WILBER

George I. Wilber was a controversial figure. No Oneontan in any age was the subject of more comment as to his private life and public activities than this banker, farmer, industrialist and public benefactor.

Even today, nearly 40 years after his death, mention of "George I." brings a flood of memories and a host of stories, some true and some highly fanciful. To many he was a modern day Scrooge, eccentric of manner and acid of tongue. To the more discerning he was a shrewd business man whose austerity hid a nature essentially generous and deeply humanitarian.

Certainly all must agree that no man has done more for the City of Oneonta. The municipally owned water system, Wilber Park, the Wilber Mansion, the huge parking lot, the beautiful Methodist church, all are the result of the generosity of this foremost citizen.

George I. Wilber was born in 1845 in a log cabin on Crumhorn Mountain. He attended the district schools and was graduated from the business course at Cazenovia Seminary in 1866. For some years thereafter he was associated with his father and brother in various enterprises in Milford.

Private banking was one of these businesses. In 1873 the bank was moved from Milford to a portion of the Brown Hardware store at the corner of Main and Dietz Streets in Oneonta. The next year the institution was organized as the Wilber National Bank.

The father, David, was in Congress for several terms and in his absence George I., the cashier, ran the bank. Upon the death of David Wilber in 1890, George I. became president, a position he held until his death.

Mr. Wilber's first interest was the bank, which he built up to great eminence in its field. His hand was in many other enterprises, however. He was a director of the Delaware & Hudson company and his voice was mighty in its councils. He was also a director of the Ulster & Delaware and of several smaller roads.

An early investor in the companies that later formed IBM, he was a heavy stockholder and a director of that concern.

The Oneonta Water Company was his creation and the Central New York Fair his pride and joy. He delighted to be called a farmer and took a lively interest in his Crumhorn Lake farm. At one time he was active in the growing and marketing of hops.

The Oneonta State Normal School, now State University College, Oneonta, resulted directly from his interest in education. He was a member of its Board for 35 years and the chairman for 13.

George I. Wilber died on July 13, 1922, and was buried in Glenwood Cemetery which had been one of his favorite projects.

The Wilber will was one of the most remarkable documents of its kind ever written and one of the lawsuits which it engendered has become one of the most famous hearings in Surrogate Court history.

## THAT WILBER WILL

"I hereby direct that none of the legacies included herein, either as to principal, or income, shall be assignable in any way whatsoever, and I further direct that all legacies included herein, unless otherwise herein specifically specified shall become payable five years (5) from the date of my decease."

That is the clause, the 64th, that caused all the trouble. Any lawyer could have told George I. Wilber that it was probably invalid. He wrote the will, however, without apparent benefit of counsel, and the result was a court action that cost the estate thousands of dollars and took months to resolve.

Mr. Wilber died on July 13, 1922, and the will was soon offered for probate. Shirley L. Huntington was then Surrogate but was succeeded on January 1 next by Sheldon H. Close, before whom the hearing for the construction of the will was heard.

The will contained 71 clauses disposing of an estate in excess of three million dollars (it would eventually be worth much more). There were 110 specific bequests to individuals and institutions. The residuum was to go to his brother and sister-in-law, D. F. and Esther Wilber and their issue, and to his niece, Edith Wilber Mix, and her issue.

The will made it possible for the City to acquire the Oneonta Water Company without cost, made provision for Wilber Park and gave the City considerable land subject to the life use of certain tenants.

The First Methodist Church was given \$100,000 and certain real estate. The Church Board of Foreign Missions, Cazenovia and Wyoming Seminaries, Glenwood Cemetery and Wilber Park in Milford were remembered. Legacies were given to employees and directors of the bank, to personal friends and retainers and to many cousins.

The reason for tying up the legacies for five years was not obscure. The bank was as precious to Mr. Wilber as life itself and it was apparently his opinion that it would be of great advantage to the institution if the estate could be handled over a five year period.

Some of the legatees wanted their money at once, however, and an action was brought to construe the will. The hearing was held in Judge Close's chambers on Dietz Street and lasted for weeks. Fifteen attorneys took part in the proceedings at varying fees paid by the estate.

It was quite a case for a surrogate so new to his position but Judge Close handled it so skillfully that no appeal was taken from his decision.

To put it simply, Judge Close threw out the 64th clause, thus allowing the estate to be administered as if the clause did not exist. The other provisions of the will were sustained.

In legal language, the clause was held invalid since the suspension of the power of alienage was measured not by lives in being but by a definite period of time and because no outlet had been provided for the income.

This is difficult to explain in layman's language but it might be said that the purpose of the law is to prevent estates from being tied up for long periods of time.



## DR. ARTHUR W. CUTLER

Dr. Arthur W. Cutler almost defies description. It is not enough to say that he was a great physician and surgeon. It is not enough to add that he had a genius for friendship and that he was generous to a fault.

The difficulty lies in imparting to those who did not know him the color and flavor of his unforgettable personality. Perhaps the best characterization lies in the simple phrase "Beloved Physician."

Arthur Ward Cutler was born in Binghamton in 1870. He was graduated from the Columbia University Medical School in 1896 and after serving his internship in General Memorial Hospital came to Oneonta in 1898.

He was chief of staff of the Fox Memorial Hospital from the day of its organization until he died and was also head of the one time school of nursing there. He was a consulting surgeon of Bassett Hospital and surgeon for the Delaware & Hudson and Southern New York railroads.

Dr. Cutler volunteered the day the U. S. entered World War I and spent nearly two years in service, being released with the rank of Lieut. Colonel. He helped organize Oneonta Post of the American Legion and was active in its work. He also belonged to the Masons, Elks, Eagles, Moose, Kiwanis and other groups.

Arthur Cutler was a big man physically and a big man emotionally. He would swear like a trooper but somehow it didn't sound like profanity. He would bawl out a student nurse (but never unjustly) and then worry about it. He was feared and at the same time adored by everyone on the hospital staff.

Dozens of stories about him persist. When he was in charge of the base hospital at Camp Mills during the terrible flu epidemic of 1918 he wired Washington for a carload of whiskey. Upon being refused he asked for a shipment of coffins instead. He got the liquor.

Once a telephone operator irritated him and he told her to keep her shirt on. He later "apologized" by saying: "Now, my dear young lady, if you don't want to keep your shirt on, why damn it all, take it off." But a huge box of candy was soon delivered to her.

One time he came out of a house, climbed into a car he thought was his and drove off. Some time later he realized that it wasn't his when the police, hunting for the "stolen" car, stopped him. The next day he had his own painted a fiery red.

Dr. Cutler died a comparatively poor man. His income was big (or should have been) but his heart was bigger. Many times he refused to charge adequately or at all and he was always digging down into his pocket to help some unfortunate individual. He was everybody's confidante and advisor.

Dr. Arthur W. Cutler died on September 26, 1924, and his funeral was the occasion of a demonstration of love and grief such as the city has rarely seen. His body lay in state in the First Presbyterian Church, guarded by his comrades of the Legion, and over 2,000 people of every race, religion and economic status filed by to pay him tribute.

## THE ONEONTA CLUB

The Oneonta Club was an unusual institution. It was a social club without a bar, one whose card rooms had no doors, where women were not permitted except on the occasion of the monthly dances.

Yet for half a century it was a haven for the community's business and professional men, its membership of 180 always full and the waiting list always long.

The club grew out of the D. F. Wilber Hook and Ladder Company. The first meeting was held on March 14, 1894, in quarters in the old Wilber Bank building at the corner of Main and South Main Streets. W. E. Ford was the first chairman of the Board of Governors and Newton Emmons the first secretary.

In 1896 the club purchased the Amsden property at the corner of Dietz Street and Reynolds Avenue and erected a building which at the time had no equal as a social club. It is now the Lewis Funeral Home.

Sumptuously furnished lounge rooms and a large billiard room occupied the first floor. Many will remember the large elk and moose heads over the fireplace mantels. Billiards was a popular game in those days and such experts as Frank Herrieff, George Baird and D. F. Keyes played frequently.

In the basement was one of the first bowling alleys in the village. There were but two lanes and the pins were hand set but many a fine game was rolled there. Among the outstanding bowlers were L. H. Townsend, John Laskaris and Charles Shelland.

On the second floor were the card rooms and the ball room. The latter wasn't large but the floor was suspended by cables from the roof girders with a resultant dancing surface that was heavenly on the feet.

The Club social season always began with an election night smoker. In addition to affairs of this nature there were card, billiard and bowling tournaments.

Once a month during the season there was a dance. For years the only acceptable masculine attire was white tie and tails. The dinner jacket was a long time coming into favor when ladies were present. It was the age of gracious living and the club social life was dignified and restrained.

The club rules were a little rigorous and the atmosphere a trifle stuffy for the younger members, of whom there were not too many. The dances, however, were about the only ones which Normal students were allowed to attend and so they got a big play from the young bucks in the club. It was dancing until 1 and then a snack at Higgins' Lunch, where the Zim shoe store now is.

The times finally caught up with the Oneonta Club. Other methods of diversion came into favor and other social clubs and service organizations appeared. In 1943 the property was sold to Herbert Lewis and the club moved to rooms on the top floor of the Hotel Oneonta. A few more years of struggle against a changing mode of life and in 1949 the Oneonta Club gave up the ghost.

Come fall and that ghost walks again for many who remember the pleasures of old.

## FORD STONE MANSION

For 90 years the Ford Stone Mansion stood on the present site of the Wilber National Bank, a conspicuous landmark of this part of the Susquehanna valley. Not until it was razed in 1939 did citizens generally realize what a remarkable structure it was and how much of local history had centered about it.

In 1838 Eliakim R. Ford bought the Frederick Brown farm and started the erection of the dwelling which was to be the family home for many years. The farm extended from the river to the top of Normal hill and from about Dietz Street to about Maple.

The Stone Mansion was often called the "Baptist Hotel" because of its hospitality to visiting clergymen of that faith. During the winter when it was not considered frugal to heat the church, the congregation met at the Ford home for its services. There the communion bread was baked and the converts robed for baptism in the mill ditch near the D.&H. station.

Prior to the Civil War the house was a station on the famous "Underground Railroad". E. R. Ford, Jr., used to tell of the times during his boyhood when companies of escaped slaves were sheltered in rooms over the woodshed and remembered with what alacrity they would help in the work of the household. His father would provide teams and conveyances to take them to the next stop on their way to Canada, the home of Garret Smith at Peterboro, near Utica.

The house, which stood back from the street on a slight eminence, was a big one with solid stone walls, 20 inches thick, from cellar to roof. The frame was of hand hewn hill pine timbers, some of them 12 by 14 inches in size. All of the heavy timbers were mortised and pegged together with wooden dowels. The roof (and but one was ever needed) was of tin imported from England.

There were four massive chimneys and each room of any size had its own fireplace. The kitchen and dining room were in the basement and the fireplace in each was equipped with ovens for baking. A special place for boiling clothes was provided in one chimney. In the basement were also a dairy room where butter was churned, and food storage rooms.

Below the main cellar was a small sub-cellar where milk and other perishable foods were kept. Water for the house was furnished by a large spring which is now in the basement of the J. C. Penney store and is used in connection with its air conditioning system. The water was at first pumped to the house by a water wheel in the spring house. This was later replaced by two hydraulic rams.

The overflow from the spring went into a pond which was located where the Penney and adjacent blocks now are. This was used for skating and boating.

The house was never modernized and neither gas nor electricity was ever installed. No members of the Ford family had lived in it for some years prior to the time it was demolished to make way for the bank building.



## D. F. WILBER

David Forrest Wilber was one of the most popular men who ever lived in Oneonta. He was a brother of George I. Wilber but the two men were utterly different in appearance, in personality, in outlook upon life and in the nature of their accomplishments.

George I. was tall and angular; D. F. short and rotund. The former was reserved, close mouthed, frugal and Spartan in his habits; the latter outgoing, gregarious, free of purse and a bon vivant. Both had big hearts but the banker hid his under a crusty manner whereas the brother wore his on his sleeve.

D. F. Wilber was born in Milford in 1859. He received his higher education at Cazenovia Seminary where he excelled at athletics, especially baseball. Upon graduation he became associated with his father and brother in the hop business, opening an office in Oneonta in 1880.

For years he was active in the life of the village and was one of the chief architects of its growth in the two decades preceding the turn of the century. He was one of the small group of men who acquired the Yager farm and gave it to the state as a site for the Normal School.

He was deeply interested in agriculture, owning at one time one of the finest herds of Holstein-Friesian cattle in the United States. He was at one time president of the Holstein-Friesian Cattle Association of America and of the Cheviot Sheep Breeders Association.

Mr. Wilber early became interested in politics and after serving as a supervisor was in 1895 elected to the Congress from the then 21st District, comprising the counties of Otsego, Montgomery, Schoharie, Greene and Schenectady, a position which his father had held before him. He served two terms.

During the years from 1903 to 1923 he was in the United States Consular Service. It is safe to say that no consular officer ever attained greater popularity in the places where he served.

He was appointed consul at Barbadoes, West Indies, by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1903. He served thereafter at Singapore, Straits Settlements; Halifax, Nova Scotia; Kobe, Japan; Vancouver, British Columbia; Zurich, Switzerland; Genoa, Italy; and Auckland and Wellington, New Zealand. Upon leaving New Zealand he was feted as few non-Britishers have ever been.

Upon the death of his brother in 1923, D. F. Wilber returned to Oneonta and resumed his keen interest in its affairs. Following the demise of "Duffer" Weidman he became the city's chief baseball patron.

At the time of his death in 1928 at his camp at Upper Dam, Maine (on one of the best salmon pools in the country) he was a vice-president of the Wilber National Bank, a trustee of Glenwood Cemetery, a member of the Elks, Oneonta Club and Country Club and a member of the New York State Republican Committee.

His only son, David Forrest Wilber, Jr., a true chip off the old block, was killed in action in Germany early in 1945 while an infantry lieutenant with the 45th Division.

## ONEONTANS IN CIVIL WAR

"The most notable event of my army life was when I got my discharge."

The man who wrote the above in the GAR record book had been in several battles, had been wounded and had spent months in a Confederate prison camp. But he was undoubtedly expressing his real feelings as well as those of many others who were less frank.

Despite its glamorization on the screen and on TV, the Civil War was a brutal and bloody business, a fact which the Oneonta boys who wore the blue during those agonizing years a century ago, knew full well.

According to a list compiled in 1867 by N. J. Farmer, 158 residents of Oneonta township saw service during the War of the Rebellion, as it was starkly called at that time. It is probable that this figure is substantially correct.

In 1902 Harvey Baker presented to Elvin D. Farmer Post No. 119, Grand Army of the Republic, a beautifully printed and bound volume in which to keep the individual military records of the members. This historically priceless account of the participation of Oneontans in the epic struggle whose 100th anniversary is just beginning, is now owned by the Upper Susquehanna Historical Society and is kept in the New York State room in Huntington Library.

The book lists 380 men who belonged to the post between June 25, 1871 and December 31, 1927. Of course all of these men did not enlist from Oneonta nor did all the veterans in the area belong to the society.

For many men the record, written in beautiful script, is complete. For others the facts are meagre but the whole adds up to a remarkable story of who these men were, where they served, what they endured and what reactions they had. Within these pages are facts which could be fashioned into tales as fascinating and thrilling as any ever written.

From this book and from other records it can be seen that Oneontans participated in most of the war's battles. The local militia outfit became Company K of the 76th New York Volunteers. This regiment was one of the first to take the field and remained in service until Appomatox.

Company K of the 121st New York regiment was recruited from Oneonta and environs and was in many engagements. At Salem Creek the regiment lost 62 per cent of its personnel in less than 20 minutes. Elvin D. Farmer, after whom the local GAR post was named, was killed in this battle.

The 144th New York, although recruited mainly from Delaware County, had several Oneontans on its rosters. Others from the community were in the cavalry and the artillery, the engineers and the Q.M. Corps. A few were in the Navy.

Oneonta men were at Gettysburg, Fredericksburg and Spottsylvania Court House. They fought in the hell of the Wilderness, at Cold Harbor, Cedar Creek and Second Manassas. They marched through Georgia with Sherman and manned the "Swamp Angel" at the siege of Charleston. They were in the trenches before Petersburg and at Appomatox when the stillness came.

## *DR. SAMUEL H. CASE*

"A great and noble man has gone. The sun of a useful life has set and while earth is the darker, heaven is the brighter for his going."

When the editor of the *Oneonta Daily News* used those purple phrases to note the passing of Dr. Samuel H. Case, he was not merely following the custom of the period to use fanciful language to describe one deceased.

On the record this Beloved Physician, who practiced his profession here for 61 years, deserved every tribute that could be paid him.

Samuel H. Case was born in the town of Franklin in 1808. He was graduated from Delhi Academy and received his professional education in the medical school at Fairfield, Herkimer County, earning his M.D. in 1829.

Dr. Case came to Milfordville, as Oneonta was then called, as soon as he was licensed to practice medicine. At that time the community had a population of about 150. There were two hotels, a cabinet and blacksmith shop, one church (Presbyterian), two distilleries and a few houses, seven of them log cabins.

Dr. Joseph Lindsay, who became the settlement's first physician the year Dr. Case was born, was the only doctor for miles around in 1829. The venerable practitioner and the youthful healer worked side by side until the older man died in 1861.

For 61 years Dr. Case braved the heat of summer and the cold of winter as he traveled the roads and trails of Otsego and Delaware counties. No weather was too inclement for him to answer a call for help.

But Samuel Case was more than a physician. He took a keen interest in all projects for the good of the community and gave freely of his time for their fulfillment. He was an early town superintendent of schools and later a county supervisor. For years he was a pension examiner.

Dr. Case is credited with being the first man to suggest the possibility of bringing a railroad to Oneonta. We know that it was he who called the first citizens' meeting to discuss the idea.

When Dr. Case came to the community he took rooms in Angell's tavern on the northwest corner of Main and Chestnut. Here in 1834 he married Emelia A. Meigs. A son of the union, Meigs Case, was a physician here for many years, living in the house on Dietz Street now occupied by the Oneonta Glass Company.

In the year of his marriage Dr. Samuel Case erected a home and an adjoining small office building where now are the Triangle and Endicott Johnson shoe stores. In 1896 these structures were moved to what is now 30 Linden Avenue and the office attached to the house as a kitchen wing.

Dr. Case died on January 18, 1893 and was buried in Riverside Cemetery. The bearers, all prominent Oneonta citizens, were Henry Bull, George W. Fairchild, Charles H. Baker, E. Reed Ford, Howard E. Farmer, Arthur E. Ford, A. L. Mendel and Clinton P. VanWoert. Dr. Case had assisted at the birth of each of them.



## MAIN STREET DIP

During Civil War days Oneontans depended largely upon the night post from Albany for their newspapers and much of their mail. Great events were afoot and many had loved ones in the service so the demand for news was great.

Every night at seven, when the stage was due, citizens would gather at the post-office, located in a building about where Bresee's is now. If the weather was inclement they would wait inside and chat with the postmaster, Silas Sullivan. If the night was fair they would gather on the board sidewalk.

The stage was often late but eventually it would appear at the far reaches of Main Street, the four horses at a gallop as they swung around the turn near the end of Bronson's Lane (Maple Street).

In those days Main Street ran through a deep gulch about in front of the present postoffice. The down grade began in front of Hamm's service station. The road crossed Silver Creek on a plank bridge at the deepest part of the little ravine and then climbed up until it reached the level of the rest of the street about in front of the Ford Mansion (Wilber Bank site).

As the spectators down the street watched, the coach and four would disappear in the depression, to come into sight again as the rise was breasted.

When E. R. Ford built the Stone Mansion in 1840 there was no Ford Avenue and his lawns extended to beyond the present Bishop drug store. There were several outbuildings back of the house and the large kitchen garden was where now stands the building occupied by the Samson floor covering store.

The area now covered by the Penney store was rather low and marshy and Mr. Ford dredged it and made a good sized pond, filling it with the overflow from the large spring which is now under the sidewalk near the corner of Ford and Main. Water was pumped by a water wheel through wooden pipes to the mansion but the flow was copious and the excess kept the pond filled.

Mr. Ford stocked the lake with trout and planted trees around the border. In the summer there was boating and perhaps fishing and in the winter excellent skating prevailed. The smaller children slid down hill on the approaches to the ravine.

The road level in the gulch was gradually built up as mud holes were filled in. In 1874 the Main Street depression and the lower end of Ford Avenue, which had been opened in 1869, were built up to about the present grade level, leaving the pond several feet lower.

One day Silver Creek overflowed and a torrent of water poured down Ford Avenue, filling the pond half full of gravel and debris. James Stewart, who then owned the property, drained the pool and filled it in, creating a small park. Mr. Stewart, an assemblyman and prominent business man, married a granddaughter of E. R. Ford. He built and lived in the house on Ford Avenue once used by Chauncey House as a trading post.

The little park, complete with a pagoda in the center, remained until D. F. Keyes built the Penney building in 1927. The pagoda was moved to Brown Park and used as a bandstand.

## A LOT OF SMOKES

Vice President Thomas R. Marshall once said, back in the 'teen years, that what this country needed most was a good five cent cigar. That might have been true in his day but a decade earlier America had plenty of excellent cheap smokes and millions of them were made right here in Oneonta.

From 1875 until about 1905 cigar making was second only to the railroad in economic importance to the community. There was a big factory employing up to 150 men and women, several medium sized concerns with from 25 to 50 on the payrolls and a score of "buckeyes" or little fellows with one and two man shops. Two cigar box factories rounded out the picture.

The cigar industry was one of the first to be unionized and cigar makers were among the most highly paid of skilled workers. A fast man could earn from \$40 to \$50 a week in 1890, a high wage for a laboring man in those days.

The industry began in Oneonta in 1875 when C. A. Smith, a retail tobacconist, started to make cigars, first for his own trade and then for the wholesale market.

The business prospered and soon Charles Smith entered the firm, which became C. A. Smith & Company. Charles Smith was to become one of Oneonta's best known citizens as banker, assemblyman, state parks commissioner, IBM director and Grand Master of Masons in the State of New York.

In 1885 this partnership was dissolved and Charles Smith and Thomas Doyle became associated in the firm of Doyle & Smith, which became one of the best known makers of cigars in the country. It is thought to have been the first manufacturer of any product to use matches as an advertising medium. Paper matches had not yet been invented and a special plate was devised to print a message on wooden matches.

At first the firm had quarters in the Westcott block but in 1889 moved to the building which it had erected on Broad Street (now occupied by W. I. Cross). Soon an annex fronting on Market Street was added. In the best days of the industry Doyle & Smith made 10 million cigars a year and employed between 125 and 150 workers. Charles Smith retired from the firm in 1910.

Hayes & Bowdish had about 35 workers, first in the Westcott block and then in the rooms on Chestnut Street now owned by the IOOF. M. Wilber & Son (Ivan Bush) had a factory on Draper Street. Other concerns included Beams & Barnes, Barnes & Cockett, H. S. Perkins, Hayes & Potter, Glenn & Giersch, W. W. Connors and H. B. Warner.

After 1905 the industry began to decline. The invention of the cigar making machine and the increasing use of cigarets meant the end of the hand rolled cigar. However, as late as 1941, C. H. Stevener, then 80 years old, was still making a few cigars in a tiny shop on the second floor of 176 Main Street.

Here are a few of the names which the Oneonta product carried: Main Line; All Stock, No Style; Doyle's Ten; Headline; On Top; Tom Marshall; and Union Label.

## EARLY PAVEMENTS

Week after week the fight between the members of the village board of trustees went on and what started as a mild difference of opinion became a bitter, name calling squabble.

Early in 1889 Oneonta had voted to bond for \$20,000 to pave Main Street with granite blocks and Broad with cobblestones. Soon representatives of a firm selling Trinidad asphalt appeared in town and the fun started.

There was wining and dining (according to accusations levelled against some of the trustees) and a majority of the village solons changed their minds and became advocates of the "new fangled" paving material.

The fight continued meeting after meeting. The majority favored asphalt while the minority view could be summed up in one word: "NO". There was some sentiment in favor of concrete but few wanted to chance the tricky stuff.

Finally a compromise was reached. Both granite blocks and asphalt were held to be too expensive and it was decided to pave with wooden blocks, a material which would provide a "quiet" pavement and was estimated to last 10 years, at the end of which time the village should be in better financial shape.

Some type of paving was long overdue. The streets were ankle deep in mud much of the time and during the rainy spells were almost impassable. Plank foot bridges over the quagmire had to be built at about every street corner. During dry seasons dust clouds filled the air.

The paving contract was let to George B. Shearer at a price of 94½ cents per square yard. He was to get 58 cents a lineal foot for laying granite curbing where needed and 12 cents a foot for resetting what curbing already existed.

The contractor set up headquarters at the Ella Lyman sawmill on Main Street below what is now Neahwa Place. The wood used was chestnut, of which there was an abundance on the nearby hills. It took 700 cords of round logs four feet, three inches in length and from four to nine inches in diameter. These were sawed into blocks four inches long.

The street surface was levelled and rolled and tarred planks were put on it. The paving blocks were laid end on end on this foundation and the interstices filled with hot tar.

The paving was laid from the railroad crossing on Main Street to Maple and the length of Broad Street. Chestnut Street was paved as far as the Windsor Hotel and Dietz to where the street curves.

By 1902 the wooden pavement had exceeded its anticipated life span and at the time the viaduct was started it was replaced with brick. The original brick pavement extended on Main from Luther to Third Street and on Chestnut to Clinton. All of Broad was paved and a small part of Dietz. Later extensions covered Market Street, part of Prospect, Fairview as far as the Armory, Otsego to Fair and the latter street from Otsego to the Fair Grounds.

In 1924 the brick pavement was replaced by the type of macadam pavement now in use.



## CHARLOTTE TURNPIKE

If Eliakim R. Ford had had his way, the corner of Main and River Streets would undoubtedly have become the business center of Oneonta.

In 1830 when the Charlotte Turnpike was proposed, Mr. Ford had his store on that corner. He knew what effect the road would have upon Oneonta and so he tried to have it come down the south side of the river, enter the village over the bridge and continue down the valley via River Street.

This foremost citizen was successful in most of his endeavors but not in this one and the road was built on the north side of the stream. Soon after its completion Mr. Ford came "uptown" and built a store on Main Street near what was to become Broad.

The Catskill Turnpike (described in an earlier column) went from Catskill to Ithaca via Unadilla and was the first good route from the Hudson to the West. Over it came many of the people who settled this section of the valley.

The grades over the Delaware hills were heavy, however, and a more level route was sought.

In 1830 William Angell, Jacob Dietz, Frederick A. Fenn and Samuel Stephens formed the Charlotte Turnpike Company to build a road from Hotchkiss' Mills at Harpersfield to Gilbertsville by way of Oneonta.

The corporation had a capital of \$14,000 in \$25 shares. As finally surveyed, the road left the Catskill Turnpike at Harpersfield, passed through Davenport and West Davenport and proceeded through Oneonta via Main and Chestnut Streets to West Oneonta, the plan to build to Gilbertsville having been abandoned.

Before the turnpike was built, the road from West Davenport crossed the Susquehanna near the Young tavern some distance below the present bridge and continued to Oneonta much nearer the river than at present. The turnpike bridge was built where the present crossing is and the further route of the road was approximately as now.

The building of the turnpike altered Chestnut Street considerably. Before that time the street turned left at about West Street, went down the hill to the flats below the bluff, then followed the present line of the railroad and joined River Street about where the lower viaduct is now. The present course of the street dates from the building of the turnpike.

There was a tollgate at the bridge and one about every 10 miles along the road. A two horse conveyance paid 12½ cents at each tollgate. Twenty-five cents was paid for each score of cattle and half that amount for each score of sheep or hogs. A pedestrian paid three cents to walk over the bridge.

The completion of the turnpike in 1834 marked an important stage in the growth of Oneonta. For years the road was heavily traveled by man and beast. Sometimes the droves of cattle passing over it would stretch for as much as two miles.

In 1877 the turnpike was declared a public road but it was not until the early 1900s that tolls were abolished at the Emmons bridge.

## ALBERT MORRIS

Albert Morris, the first mayor of the city of Oneonta, was a solid citizen.

His accomplishments were not spectacular but his character and ability were such that he was highly respected and when it came time to elect a man to guide the destinies of the new born city through the first critical years, he was the natural choice.

Albert Morris was born in 1840 on the Morris homestead on what is now the west shore of Goodyear Lake. He was the son of Richard and Weltha (Westcott) Morris. His great-grandfather, Charles Morris, was of English and Welsh stock and had settled in the town of Milford in 1790 following service in the Continental army during the Revolution.

Mr. Morris attended a select school in Oneonta and later studied at Hartwick Seminary. He taught school for a short time and then in 1866 became associated with George Reynolds in the feed and grain business in Oneonta, their first store being in a frame building which stood where Chestnut Street extension now meets Main.

Mr. Reynolds died in 1869 and was replaced in the firm by Albert's brother, William H. Morris. The name of Morris Brothers was favorably known over a wide territory for many years. The firm dealt, both wholesale and retail, in grain, flour, feed and seeds.

The firm was regarded as conservative and evidence of that trait can be found in its ad in the Oneonta Herald and Democrat in 1874. It was the custom in those days to date ads and this one carried a date of four years previously. It listed each item the firm carried (without prices) and declared it to be of the highest quality. Since nothing more could be said, why change the ad?

The business grew and in 1870 moved to a two story frame building on Chestnut Street where the Odd Fellows Temple now is. This burned in 1881 and was replaced with the three story brick structure now on the site.

In 1892 a large brick warehouse and grain elevator was built on Market Street where West-Nesbitt now is. This burned in 1910 in one of the city's worst fires. The building now on the site was built the following year.

Albert Morris was married in 1868 to Mary Birdsall and they had three sons, A. Stanley, Burton H. and Clifford R., all of whom entered the firm after the retirement in 1906 of their Uncle William.

The Morrisises all lived in the same locality. Albert built the brick house at the corner of Maple and Walnut now owned by Harold Brady. Burton lived next to his father on Walnut Street in the big white-columned house. Son Clifford resided on the opposite corner of Walnut in the house now occupied by his widow while Stanley lived across Maple in the house now owned by Dr. G. Traver Sanly. Brother William lived where the Parochial School now is.

Albert Morris was the first president of the Oneonta Club and of the Glenwood Cemetery Association. He died on March 17, 1923, full of years and honors and respected by all.

## AN INDIAN GRAVE

The boys were hopeful that their labors would bear fruit but they certainly did not expect to find an Indian grave—one of the few ever discovered, despite the fact that hundreds of redskins must have been buried in this vicinity.

Adrian Blanchard had picked up several arrowheads the year before on the Parish Farm on the north bank of the Susquehanna about two miles below Oneonta and a few hundred yards south of the sewage disposal plant. On this May morning in 1923 he and Wendell Richards were digging on the site with the hope of unearthing a few more specimens.

The spot was about halfway between the old Scramling private cemetery and the river. They had dug but a short time (Indian graves were not deep) when they discovered parts of a skeleton together with several burial objects.

Indian authority Willard E. Yager was notified and he directed the further course of the excavation. The skeleton was far from complete but it was clearly that of an Indian.

The body was orientated (facing the east) as was Indian burial custom. The grave contained fragments of two earthen pots (with the vertebrae of a large fish in the bottom of one), gorgets (ornaments), stone chisels, pieces of mica (placed by Indians over the eyes of the dead) and a string of 34 copper beads.

Apparently the objects had been broken before being buried with the dead, according to the custom of "killing" an object when placed in a grave so that its "soul" would go over with that of the Indian.

The skeleton as well as the other objects are now part of the Yager collection owned by Hartwick College.

Mr. Yager estimated that the grave dated from the first half of the 17th century, probably from about the 1630s. All of the articles are from the stone culture of the Algonquins (Algonkians) except the copper beads, which were probably brought in by some Indian traveler from one of the early Dutch settlements along the Hudson.

Many artifacts have been found on the surface in the vicinity of the grave, indicating the existence there of an extensive village occupied over a period of several hundred years.

About a century before, when the grave of Henry Scramling was being dug in the private cemetery not far away, an Indian skeleton wrapped in bark was found. Probably there are more graves in the vicinity.

This village site is about a mile above the large Wauteghe site on the old Van Woert farm at the junction of Otego Creek and the Susquehanna. This ancient village of the archaic Algonquin period is mentioned in the journals of both Gideon Hawley and Richard Smith, who visited the region before the Revolution.

The sites were unoccupied at that time but there was considerable evidence that large villages had existed there previously.



## THE WALLING MANSION

Thrice had its 20 rooms known the gaiety of wedding celebrations and four times had death crept on silent feet down its long hallways but never in all of its 77 years had the thick brick walls contained the joy attendant upon the birth of a child.

When James Raymond Lee Walling died in 1892 in the big house on the corner of Main Street and Walling Avenue where the United Presbyterian Church now stands, his line died with him. There are descendants of the Walling pioneer now living in Oneonta but the line which made the name famous ended with J.R.L.

Simeon Walling, a New Englander who had fought in the Revolution, came into the valley in 1784, made a clearing in the forest which bordered the Indian trail which is now Main Street and built a log tavern. In 1808 he replaced this with a frame structure.

In this tavern the first Masonic lodge in the town (chartered in 1814) held its meetings. Simeon died in 1829 and his son Joseph purchased the interests in the property (then amounting to 115 acres) of his mother, his brothers, Jeremiah, Samuel and Charles, and his sister, Sally Emmons. The consideration was \$900 plus his promise always to provide for the mother.

Joseph had long dreamed of being a country squire with many acres and a fine mansion and in 1853 he started to make the dream a reality. That fall he sent wagons and men to Fort Plain and they returned that winter with heavy loads of long red brick. The caravan came down Otsego Lake on the ice, men with pikes walking ahead to test the strength of the improvised roadbed.

Out of the nearby forests came the huge timbers which framed the house. The wooden building which had been the tavern was used in part as annexes on the east side and on the rear of the brick structure. Large barns were erected in back. By this time Joseph had more than 200 acres of land stretching from the river to the hill back of East Street.

Joseph died in 1867 and his only child, J. R. L. Walling, inherited the property. By this time the railroad had reached Oneonta and the village was growing rapidly. The Walling farm was right in the path of the expansion and J.R.L. was not one to miss an opportunity. He laid out streets and sold lots right and left. When he died in 1892 he was a wealthy man.

His widow, born Alevia Yager, resided in the east wing of the house until her death in 1927 and is said to have doubled the family fortune.

The Walling farm included what are now Walling Heights (Roosevelt, Wilson and Taft Avenues and Walling Boulevard) and Wilber Park. For years what is now the upper park level was known as Walling's Grove and was the scene of many picnics and civic functions.

The newly born Hartwick College held its first sessions in the venerable mansion. In 1930 the property was acquired by the United Presbyterian Church from its then owner, J. Kenneth Yager (Mrs. Walling's nephew), the buildings were razed and the church erected. An era had ended.

## COLLIS P. HUNTINGTON

Collis P. Huntington once said to a hotel clerk after he found a 25 cent overcharge on his hotel bill: "Young man, you can't follow me through life by the quarters I have dropped."

It was this quality of thrift, together with the sure instincts of a Yankee trader, a genius for organization and a flexible code of business ethics that made Oneonta's most famous resident one of the great railroad builders of all time and one of the wealthiest men the country has known.

At his death in 1900 he controlled the Central Pacific, Southern Pacific and Chesapeake and Ohio railroads, steamship lines on both oceans, the great shipbuilding yards at Newport News, Va., and dozens of other enterprises.

Collis Potter Huntington was born in Harwinton, Conn., in 1821. In 1840 he and his brother Solon came to Oneonta and established a general store, adding to their capital by real estate ventures and other enterprises.

Collis was one of the incorporators of the village, one of the first street commissioners and captain of the first fire company. He and his mother lived in a house standing where Loblaw's market now is.

Solon was to spend the rest of his life in Oneonta but Collis had tasted financial success and wanted more of it. In 1848 the firm made a shipment of goods to California and the next year Collis followed it, taking with him \$1,500. He was delayed in Panama three months and traded his stake up to \$5,000.

He located in Sacramento and opened a branch of the Oneonta store which was tremendously successful. He bought cheap and sold high, in one case acquiring steel rails at \$20 a ton and reselling at \$1 per pound. Soon he went into partnership with Mark Hopkins and the firm became Huntington & Hopkins.

Mr. Huntington conceived the idea of a transcontinental railroad and in 1854 he, Hopkins and two other merchants, Leland Stanford and Charles Crocker, formed the Central Pacific Company and started to build eastward, finally meeting the west-bound Union Pacific at Promontory Point, Utah.

Eventually the "Big Four" held the West in a tight financial grip and all became enormously wealthy. Huntington saved his money while the others spent theirs prodigally. He was working long after they had retired to their palaces and he survived them all.

He never lost his regard for Oneonta, where most of his family lived and died. His private cars were named the Oneonta I and Oneonta II. Most of his estate went to his nephew, Henry, a native Oneontan, and his sisters were handsomely remembered so that a good deal of Huntington money came to Oneonta.

Collis P. Huntington died in 1900 at his Adirondack camp. The funeral was held at his Fifth Avenue mansion and he was buried in Westchester Cemetery in the most costly private mausoleum yet erected (\$300,000).

Like most of the "robber barons", C. P. Huntington was a paradox. In his personal relationships he was charming and strictly ethical; in his business dealings he was cold-eyed, implacable and ruthless and (according to his contemporaries) possessed of the morals of a shark.

## SPANNING THE RIVER

Had the Oneonta Rotary Club's plan been carried fully into effect, the present bridge across the Susquehanna River at the foot of Main Street would be called "Memorial Bridge".

Early in 1930 Joseph A. McCarthy proposed to Rotary that an effort be made to secure a new bridge to replace the antiquated iron structure then spanning the stream and that it be dedicated as a memorial to the Oneonta men who had died in the service of their country.

The club liked the idea and the president, Edwin R. Moore, appointed a committee of Mr. McCarthy, W. H. Hoffman, Sr. and himself to further the project.

The committee got the old bridge condemned and a new one authorized and finally built. The memorial idea was dropped, however, when some veterans objected on the ground that a state built bridge would not make a good local memorial.

The present concrete and steel structure is the fifth bridge to span the river at the foot of Main. The first was a railless affair built in 1786 by John Vanderwerker who erected the town's first grist mill in that year.

This span stood several rods farther up the river than the present bridge. Within a few years flood waters washed it away and about 1808 James McDonald, who had built saw and grist mills on the present Elmore Milling Company site, replaced it with another rude structure.

This was used until 1835 when the building of the Franklin Turnpike made a better bridge necessary. It took the form of a wooden covered bridge located approximately where the present bridge is. William Richardson built it of clear, hewed pine fastened with white oak pins two inches in diameter.

The covered bridge lasted until 1888 when it was replaced by an iron structure which was regarded at the time as one of the wonders of this part of the state. D. F. Wilber was the town of Oneonta supervisor at the time and the engineer for the bridge was Alva Seybolt.

During the 128 days it took to construct the bridge, vehicular traffic was detoured via the lower river bridge. Pedestrians could cross the stream for five cents on a rowboat ferry operated by Delos (Trapper) Watkins.

The bridge was opened to the public on January 22, 1889. Other than an official party of village brass, the first to cross was James O. Coy, driving his 2:16¼ pair of ponies before a cutter.

The Oneonta Weekly Spy made this interesting editorial observation: "Before 10 o'clock scores of teams and hundreds of people had tested and approved the new and handsome structure, which we hope may endure until at least 1999, or a century or two longer. Long before that time street cars will cross on that bridge or another, and the South Side wards will be counted by thousands of people."

The bridge gave many years of good service but the ever heavier traffic hastened its end and in 1930 it was condemned and three years later the present structure was erected at a cost of \$117,000.



## FRANK H. BRESEE

Frank H. Bresee watched the man take several eggs from the display in the grocery section of the Oneonta Department Store and put them in his pocket.

What the owner of the big store did next was entirely in character. There was no calling of police, no fuss or fanfare. "F.H." simply greeted the man heartily and gave him a hard slap on the pocket with obvious results.

This habit of speedy direct action was one of the reasons why the tall Yankee trader was able to run a stake of but a few dollars into a business that has sales of several million dollars a year and is nationally known.

Frank Harmon Bresee was born in Hartwick in 1864. His ancestors were of Huguenot and Dutch stock who became farmers in Delaware County about 1804.

He started his career at the age of 16 as a door to door peddler of Yankee notions. A little store in an upper room of his father's house was the next step. In 1884 he married Ella Benjamin and she kept store while Frank made his selling rounds. In the evenings they played at dances, she being a pianist and he a self taught "fiddler."

"F.H." bought his first store at South Hartwick in 1884 and at various times during the ensuing years owned small stores in Laurens, Hartwick, New Lisbon, Fly Creek, Schenevus and Sidney. In 1899 he came to Oneonta and started business in the Baird block next to the present Bresee location. There were six persons on the payroll compared to 147 at the present time.

Since this is the story of Frank Bresee rather than that of the store he founded, suffice it to say that the business grew steadily in floor space, in volume of sales and in prestige.

Frank H. Bresee was more than an unusually able and successful merchant. First of all he was a family man, whose affection for his wife, his sons and his grandchildren was unbounded. His home on Maple Street at the head of Walnut was close by the homes of Lynn, Clyde and Fred and the family tie was unusually strong.

His civic activities were many. He was an organizer of the Merchants' Association and the Chamber of Commerce and was one of the first trustees of Hartwick College and a hard worker in its behalf. He was a Mason and a charter member of Kiwanis.

Frank Bresee helped formulate the city charter and was for several years a member of the Board of Public Works. In 1917 he was the Democratic candidate for mayor, running against his close friend, Andrew Ceperley. During the campaign neither man uttered a word, except of praise, concerning the other.

He was the first president of the Citizens National Bank and was largely responsible for the fact that when the Citizens took over the defunct First National Bank, not a depositor lost a cent.

Frank Bresee was an enthusiastic baseball fan, rarely missing a game. On May 26, 1941, as he was watching a Hartwick College game, he remarked to Lynn that the Hartwick pitcher should be removed. Those were his last words. He died, as he had lived, doing something he liked.

## DR. JOSEPH LINDSAY

When Dr. Joseph Lindsay, Oneonta's pioneer physician, came to the tiny community in 1807 not one of its few dozen inhabitants could speak English so as to be understood.

The first settlers in this part of the valley were Palatinates from the older towns along the Mohawk and the Schoharie and they spoke Low German. These were the people among whom Lindsay first practiced but their predominance did not long survive the Yankee invasion from New England.

Joseph Lindsay was born in Pelham, Mass., in 1776. His father was a Scot who had fled his native land to escape the vengeance of the enemies of the Stuarts. The elder Lindsay had stormed the heights at Quebec during the French and Indian War, had fired when he saw the whites of British eyes at Bunker Hill and as Captain John Lindsay was in Gates' command at Saratoga.

Joseph received a classical education at Williams College before studying medicine. He had intended to practice at Pelham but was attracted by reports of the beauty and fertility of the Schoharie and Susquehanna valleys.

Dr. Lindsay practiced briefly in Cherry Valley and Schoharie before coming to Oneonta. Here he lived for over half a century, here he raised his family and here he died in 1861.

The Oneonta which Dr. Lindsay found in 1807 was a far different place from that of today. There were but two streets, Main and Chestnut, both narrow wood roads with the forests crowding so close that the branches intertwined overhead. There was a road of sorts where Maple Street is now but River Street had not yet been cut through the dense hemlock forest.

There were but a few scattered buildings on the north side of Main between the log tavern of Aaron Brink near the present viaduct and the Simeon Walling tavern on the present site of the United Presbyterian church. On the south side, there was but one structure east of the McDonald grist and saw mills, which stood about where the Elmore mill now is. This was a frame schoolhouse located where Broad Street now meets Main.

There were three log houses on Chestnut Street, one on the Huntington Library site and the other two opposite the present Victory supermarket.

A one story frame house stood where the gas station now is on the lower corner of Main and Grove Streets and here Dr. Lindsay took up his residence and lived until his death.

There were three taverns and three stores but not as yet a church edifice, the barn of Frederick Brown, which stood near where the Wilber Bank now is, serving as the meeting place of the Presbyterians, the only organized sect.

Dr. Lindsay was the only educated man in the community and for some years he conducted a select school, teaching when he could find time from his widespread medical practice.

The "Beloved Physician" had married Polly Holbrook in New England before coming to Oneonta. Among their many descendants were Loomis Campbell, editor of Webster's Dictionary, and Dudley Campbell, local historian.

## PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

It is not often that a minister owns a church, especially one from which he has been ousted. It happened in Oneonta in 1847, however, when the Rev. Joseph Paddock sued for back salary, secured judgment, took possession of the church building and locked out the congregation.

Yellowing records in the archives of the First Presbyterian Church, the oldest religious body in the city, contain much quaint and curious lore about the early life of the community. The history of the church is pretty much that of the community, with its small beginnings, its minor problems, its disappointments and its triumphs and its final emergence as an institution of size, strength and influence.

The New York Gazetteer states that there was a Presbyterian church in what is now Oneonta in 1786 but its history perished with those unknowns who were identified with it.

In 1800 a number of residents of the tiny hamlet, nearly all of Palatine stock, petitioned the Dutch Reformed Church in Albany for assistance in forming a church. The Rev. Nicholas VanHorne met with a group at the home of Frederick Brown (on Wilber Bank site). Deacons and elders were chosen and a religious society of no particular denomination (or so it would appear from the record) was formed.

Those first officers were John Houghtaling, Henry Scramling, John Vanderwerker, James Dietz, William Morenus, David Scramling, Aaron Barnes and James Quackenbush.

Mr. Brown donated the land upon which the church now stands and in 1805 timber for a house of worship was delivered to the spot. Nothing further was done, however, and the lumber rotted on the ground. In 1815 another start was made and this time the church was built with William Angell as the contractor.

In 1823 the society was reorganized as the Second Presbyterian Church of Milford, the village being then in that township and known as Milfordville. For the next few decades the going was rather rough for the small band of earnest Christians.

It was during this period that the "Case of the Vengeful Parson" occurred and for a time the congregation met in homes and in other churches. Upon the death of Mr. Paddock the church was reclaimed for \$150.

A complete reorganization was effected in 1849 and from this the First Presbyterian Church of Oneonta emerged. From this time on the church grew steadily in size and influence.

In 1869 Collis P. Huntington gave \$1,000 to his family's church for the purchase of an organ. There was no place to put either it or the scores of new members who had come to Oneonta in the wake of the railroad, so the structure was enlarged and remodeled.

The white church with its graceful spire stood in its commanding position on Main Street with its terraced lawns in front and a beautiful old cemetery forming the background until 1887 when ground was broken for the present brick building. This was enlarged in 1909-10.



## STANTON OPERA HOUSE

Time is running out for the phantoms which have peopled the rooms and corridors of the Stanton Opera House for lo, these many years.

The big building on the corner of Main and Chestnut Streets is slated for demolition and within months there will remain only memories of a place which was for years the center of the cultural and social life of the village. (n.b. After this story was written the block was sold to a man who plans to remodel rather than to raze it. The ghosts have been given a reprieve.)

When the block was built in 1873 by G. H. Rockwell and L. H. Stanton it was considered a marvel of architectural and structural design. The first floor was built for stores and the second for offices while the third and fourth floors housed a large hall complete with balcony, stage and all the other necessities of a first class theatre.

The auditorium was 48 by 72 feet in size with a 20 foot ceiling. Movable chairs furnished seating for about 600 spectators.

High under the eaves on the Main Street side is the old dressing room, its walls covered from floor to ceiling with posters and playbills still bright and gay under the grime of three-quarters of a century.

Those were the days of minstrelsy and melodrama, the days of the "heavy" with his pomaded moustache and sneering voice and the lily white maiden who always managed to remain just that despite her harrowing experiences.

The pulse quickening posters advertise such famous plays of yesteryear as "East Lynne," "The White Crook," "The Little Speculator," "The Thoroughbred," "The Baggage Check," "Tim, the Tinker," and "A Trip to the City" (the heroine survived even this).

Then there are the gaudy sheets telling of the minstrel shows of Hi Henry, of G. W. Vreeland and of Al G. Fields, not to mention Liberatti and his 60 Piece Concert Band.

During the theatre's heyday, the Star Lecture and Musical Course, organized by George W. Fairchild and Harlow E. Bundy, used its facilities. On its stage appeared such forum greats as Wendell Phillips, Henry Ward Beecher, Daniel Dougherty, General George Sheridan, Josh Billings, John B. Gough, Mary Livermore and Theodore Tilton.

The hall was used for all manner of public events, including the commencement exercises of Oneonta Union High School. When the first Normal School burned, classes were held there for some months.

In 1875 the Third Separate Company of the State Militia was organized and its first Grand Military Ball was held in the Opera House. The company also drilled there periodically until the first Armory was built in 1886.

The theatre had its disadvantages. It was three flights up with no elevators to ease the climb. Furthermore, there was but one means of egress in case of fire. In 1886 the skating rink on Dietz Street (Huntington Park site) was converted into the Metropolitan Theatre and the nights of glory were over for the Stanton Opera House.

In 1897 the theatre was remodeled into a lodge room and was used by the Oneonta Masonic bodies until the Fairchild Mansion was purchased by the lodge in 1929.

## THE EMMONS FAMILY

"Emmons! The next station is Emmons!"

It has been 90 years since railroad conductors have uttered that cry. Time was, however, when it was heard several times a day as Albany & Susquehanna (now D.&H.) trains discharged passengers and freight at the thriving hamlet three miles east of Oneonta.

Emmons was a busy place in the late 1860s with two hotels, a railroad station, a general store and a cluster of houses. At one time 19 villages of Delaware County made Emmons their shipping station. Eventually, with the building of other railroads, the trade went elsewhere. After the station was closed in 1872, the town languished and finally died.

Who were these Emmons after whom the community was named? They were one of the pioneer families of the region and being the breed of men they were, they left an indelible mark on the landscape.

Asa and Ira Emmons, natives of Connecticut and brothers, were the first of the name in this section. Asa, the older, settled in 1800 on the southside farm now owned by the Simonson brothers but known for years as the Slade farm.

On the banks of the Susquehanna, just below the mouth of the Charlotte and the old Indian village, Asa built a sawmill and a wool carding and cloth dressing factory. He did extensive lumbering and ran rafts down the river to Chesapeake Bay. On one of these trips he died in Baltimore in 1820.

Two of his sons, Roderick and Carlton, were prominent in the valley for many years. It was they who, about 1834, opened the hotel on the northwest corner of Main and Chestnut Streets which later became the Susquehanna House.

In 1840, Roderick built the stone store which, enlarged and remodeled, is now the City Drug store. For some years he ran a stove and hardware business in that location and a foundry off the bank on the other side of Main Street.

Carlton Emmons, in addition to his hotel activity, took over his father's business, running the mills, farming it and rafting large quantities of lumber down the river.

Later Carlton ran the famous Emmons Tavern near the site of the present Emmons Manor. This tavern, built about 1817 by Jacob Young, was for years one of the most famous hostelries on the Charlotte Turnpike. Teamsters and drovers, taking cattle and produce to the nearest railhead at Fort Plain or to the Hudson valley, always made it a point to spend the night at Emmons Tavern if possible.

Carlton Emmons was the grandfather of Mrs. Kendrick E. Morgan, whose husband built the mansion which once housed the Emmons Manor restaurant.

Ira Emmons, the brother, came into the valley in 1820 and bought a farm east of what is now Emmons. There he built the large stone house which Dr. A. F. Carson bought and remodeled.

This Emmons was a surveyor who ran lines on most of the land in this section of the valley. One of his daughters, Harriet, married the pioneer, E. R. Ford. Other well known descendants were Lester, Carson and Newton Emmons.

## EMMONS STONE MANSION

It's a haunted house which has never known a ghost; a place honeycombed with tunnels which were never built; a structure filled with fanciful legends and mythical stories.

And yet in its own right the stately stone mansion near Emmons is a remarkable building whose place in local history needs no bolstering.

Ira Emmons came into the valley early in the 1800s and bought 1,000 acres of land along the Susquehanna. He combined the vocations of hop farmer and lumber dealer, in the latter capacity sending many rafts down the river.

In 1817 he commenced the erection of what was to be his manor house, entering into this interesting contract: "This may certify that I, Lyman Honawell, mason, have this day agreed with I. Emmons to work for him at his stone house which he is about to erect in the county of Otsego for \$14 a month, he finding me board, and a half a pint of whisky a day while at work."

The mansion was finished in 1821 and a remarkable house it was for the time and place. There were 17 rooms, five fireplaces, 11 closets and eight stairways. What is now the front of the home was originally the rear since the house faced the road, which was then much nearer the river than at present.

For years legends have clustered around this dwelling. Many have been printed as fact. It was said to have been a station on the Underground Railroad by which runaway slaves escaped to Canada but there is definite proof that the local station was the Ford Stone Mansion on Main Street.

It has been stated that when Ira Emmons came from Baltimore he brought along a retinue of slaves. The story goes that one of them was either beaten to death at a whipping post in the cellar or was taken into the woods and shot. It is his ghost that is supposed to have haunted the house ever since.

The neighbors were said to have threatened Ira because of his harsh treatment of his slaves so he built a tunnel to the river by which he could escape if need be. Another version is that the tunnel was built to the barn so that he could get away if the house were attacked by Indians or foreign troops. Such tunnels are often found in manor houses of an earlier period but when Ira built there was danger from neither redskin nor redcoat.

It has been said that Emmons did not release his slaves until the Civil War actually began.

The legends are easily disproved. Ira brought with him one small colored boy who was not a slave but an indentured servant. He had no quarrel with his neighbors but was a man trusted and respected. Slavery was abolished in New York State long before the Civil War. No one has ever found any trace of the tunnel. As for the ghost—well, you can make up your own mind about that.

Following Emmons' death in 1863 the property passed into alien hands. In 1905 it was purchased back by Newton H. Emmons, a grandson, and restored to its former splendor. When the latter died in 1916 it was purchased by William Hungerford, who built a gas station in front of it. In 1942 Dr. A. F. Carson bought the property and after the war remodeled it extensively.



## YEAR WITHOUT SUMMER

The McDonald and Walling taverns at opposite ends of the tiny hamlet filled up early that mid-July afternoon nearly a century and a half ago.

What else was there to do? There was haying to be done but how could you cut grass which was frozen to the ground? The Presbyterian church was far from finished but you couldn't work on icy scaffolds with the wind blowing snow and hail in your face.

It was an especially melancholy day for the kids. According to the calendar they should have been playing and swimming but shoes had been put away for the summer and the snow covered ground was unkind to bare feet. And how could a feller swim when there was an inch of ice on the pond above the mill!

The month was July but the time was 1816, the Year Without a Summer. From January through December there was not a month without frost, snow and ice. The crop yield was small throughout the country and the suffering intense.

January was generally mild although there were some frosts. February followed suit. March came in like a small lion but went out like an innocent lamb. April started out seasonably but as the days lengthened the temperature kept dropping.

The cold continued throughout May and in June no roses grew. There was a frost nearly every day in the month and growing things died on every hand. On the 10th a foot of snow fell in Oneonta.

July was even worse. The crops that had survived gave up the struggle. A snow storm on July 4th interrupted the birthday party of the young republic. On the 14th came the storm which stopped work on the new church and drove mechanics and farmers alike to the comfort of the grog shops.

August was no better. Throughout the United States and Europe frosts killed about every green thing. There was little hay, no sound corn, and fruits and berries were non-existent. But for the surpluses of food from the preceding good season and the fact that the forests teemed with game and the lakes and streams with fish, millions would have perished.

There was no fall that year, only an early winter. September and October were unusually cold and by November, King Frost was in complete control of the situation.

The next year was normal in respect to temperature but the effects of the preceding 12 months were felt tremendously. There was a great lack of fodder and acres of trees were felled that cattle might feed on the buds and tender shoots. There was little seed corn and almost all the seed potatoes had been eaten. What little could be purchased brought outrageous prices. One man was reported to have given three days' labor for one bushel of rye.

Just why 1816 was so different weatherwise from all the years before and after has never been satisfactorily explained. Meteorologists will tell you how it happened but have never said why.

Yes, the year of "Eighteen Hundred and Starve" was quite a twelve months. Reflect upon it and shiver!

## FOX AND THE HOSPITAL

He was tall, dark and handsome and she was very beautiful. They met, with Cupid an interested spectator, and soon they were wed. As an indirect result of this romance Oneonta has its Aurelia Osborn Fox Memorial Hospital.

Reuben L. Fox was born in 1841 in Pitcher, Chenango County. At the age of 20 he answered the Civil War call for volunteers and served as a first lieutenant of the 22nd New York Cavalry in many bloody battles.

Soon after war's end he came to Oneonta with a comrade, Charles Bixby, and the two entered into a partnership with L. S. Osborn in the operation of a general store on the site of the present B. F. Sisson establishment.

Bixby soon sold his interest and the firm continued as Osborn & Fox. The senior partner had a lovely daughter, Aurelia, and it was not long before she and the dashing young ex-cavalryman were madly in love. On October 15, 1867, Reuben L. Fox and Aurelia Osborn were married.

They lived in Oneonta for some years, during which Fox was active in many phases of village life. He became a Mason and was a charter member and the first commander of E. D. Farmer Post, Grand Army of the Republic.

Fox became immersed in Republican politics and in 1875 was made financial secretary of the Assembly. In 1895 he was chosen secretary of the state Republican committee and arranged for its delegations at several national conventions. He also ran a bureau of legislative information at the capital.

Colonel Fox (as he was called) became interested in several commercial ventures and amassed what was a tidy fortune in those days. He and Mrs. Fox became prominent in political and social circles in Albany and New York but always regarded Oneonta as their home and returned here frequently.

Aurelia Osborn Fox died in 1899 and was buried in Oneonta. Her husband first considered a gift to the Albany Hospital in her memory but when he found that Oneonta needed a hospital he offered to give \$10,000 to build one if the village would provide the site.

The Norton property was acquired for \$1,000, the funds being raised by the sale at \$50 each of memberships in the hospital society. The cornerstone laying on October 5, 1900, turned Oneonta into a Masonic Mecca. Masons and Knights Templar from 25 communities participated in a parade with music by Gartland's 10th Regiment Band from Albany, the 20th Regiment Band from Kingston and The Star Fife and Drum Corps.

Mr. Fox was killed in 1909 when he suffered an attack of vertigo and fell from a moving automobile near New York City. His will, the executor of which was former governor Benjamin B. Odell, a close personal friend, left \$30,000 and one half of the residual estate to the hospital. The other half went, in trust, to a sister with the proviso that the principal would go to the hospital upon her death.

The only restriction to the legacy was that the institution must always be called the Aurelia Osborn Fox Memorial Hospital. The total amount of the gifts to the hospital of this public benefactor was about \$230,000.

## THE CHINESE WALL

They called it the Chinese Wall because it was by far the largest masonry structure for miles around.

As a matter of fact it still is, for the retaining wall on the left side of Chestnut Street below West is a much more massive affair than most people realize. What appears to be just an ordinary wall is in reality a stone buttress nearly 700 feet long, 30 feet high for most of its length and from seven to 10 feet thick.

It all began back in 1834 when the Charlotte Turnpike was built through the village. Before then, Chestnut Street turned left near West Street, went down the hill to the flats and then followed the present line of the railroad to about where the lower viaduct is, where it joined River Street.

The Turnpike was to extend to West Oneonta and the present course of Chestnut Street provided the most direct route so the road was built on a narrow shelf along the hillside.

For over 50 years the road clung to its precarious perch. In 1888 the residents of the fourth ward protested mightily to the village trustees over the condition of the thoroughfare. There were no sidewalks and the street was narrow and at times almost impassable. It was decided to widen it but it was soon discovered that a retaining wall must be built.

The wall was started promptly but progress was slow. There was difficulty in securing the stone (over 200,000 cubic feet was needed) and few men could be spared to work upon it since at the time Main Street was being paved (with wooden blocks) and Chestnut Street was being extended to Market. It took two years to build the wall and it cost about \$13,000, a lot of money in those days.

The land upon which the wall was built was owned by James O. Coy, who lived near the eastern end. Whether he sold it to the village or granted an easement is not clear.

On the wall site a trench was dug, two feet deep and six wide. On top of this a cut was made five feet into the bank. The wall was 10 feet wide at the bottom and seven feet at the top. It was a dry wall, laid without mortar, but it has held up remarkably well. In 1956 when a new walk was laid the wall was found to be in no danger of the predicted collapse.

For years a road called the "dugway" went down through the woods at the lower end of the wall to a little settlement between the bluff and the railroad tracks. Here were four streets, Ash, Williams, North and Lake, the latter ending at Fonda Avenue.

About 30 families lived there, separated from the railroad by a high board fence. To say the least, it was not the most desirable residential section of the village.

In 1913 the Delaware & Hudson Company bought the land in front of the wall including that occupied by the buildings. These were moved to various locations on the other side of the tracks and "behind the board fence" became only a memory.



## METROPOLITAN THEATRE

Time ran out long years ago for the ghostly denizens of the old Metropolitan Theatre on Dietz Street.

The Stanton Opera House still contains its phantoms and its memories but the cavernous structure which once stood on the north portion of the lower level of Huntington Park was demolished a half century ago.

Back in the '80s roller skating was quite a fad and in 1884 two rinks were built which gave Oneonta unequalled facilities. These were the Columbian on Mechanic (now Market) Street and the Metropolitan on Dietz. The former lasted but a few months.

The Metropolitan flourished as a skating rink for about two years. Contests of all kinds were held and many professionals exhibited their talents there. A local talent group called the London Juvenile Skating Combination earned a wide reputation. Among its members were Matie Loveland, Maud Miller, Case Miller, George Bristol, Tommy Glenn, Little Joe Connors and Fred Hotaling.

The skating craze eventually died out and the Metropolitan was remodeled and opened in 1886 as a theatre. "Virginius" played by the Joseph Proctor Dramatic Company, was the opening attraction.

For a decade the social life of the village, deserting the Stanton Opera House, centered around this huge wooden structure. It served not only as a theatre but as a hall where public and private balls and parties were held. In addition to the usual theatrical trappings, there was a kitchen, dining rooms and a smoking apartment. Amateur theatricals were held there and boxing exhibitions took place within its walls.

The stage was roomy, 40 by 60 feet in size, and the auditorium could accommodate 1,300 spectators. The building was steam heated with a mile or so of pipes along its walls. On cold nights when the fire was pushed the place sounded like a busy machine shop.

The Metropolitan attracted the best traveling talent in the country. Eva Tanguay, the "I Don't Care" girl, sang there. The famous Dan Daley family appeared in "Vacation". The Cohans in "Dublin Dan" were another popular group, with George M. Cohan, aged 12, playing a violin solo. "Peck's Bad Boy" played often.

Oneonta was an exceptionally good town for minstrel shows and dozens of the best played here, including Thatcher, Primrose and West, Whitney's San Francisco Minstrels and Whelan's Operatic Minstrels.

Medicine shows were popular, especially Judson's Arabian Company, which would rent the theatre for two weeks and put on a different show each night.

When the Oneonta Theatre opened in 1897 the Metropolitan was through. It struggled along for a time and then was closed as a theatre. It was then used as a warehouse, a carpenter shop and a second hand store.

In 1910 it went on the block. Fred J. Baker bought it, for its materials, for \$305 and had it torn down.

## HE BROKE THE BANK

Herbert T. Jennings was a wheeler-dealer long before that term for a big operator was invented. His financial juggernaut got out of control, however, and after dealing mortal blows to two banks it wheeled him straight through the big doors of the federal prison at Atlanta.

Jennings' base of operations was Mt. Vernon, N. Y., but he had married an Oneonta girl (May Wilson) and so became interested in things hereabouts. He first appeared on the local scene in 1899 when the little Oneonta & Otego Valley Railroad, which operated the trolley lines in the village and to West Oneonta, faced serious financial difficulties.

Jennings bailed the road out and took control. He then pushed the line northward, first to Richfield Springs and eventually to Mohawk. For the next decade the road apparently prospered but Jennings was always in hot water. He lost control, regained it and then lost it again.

Meanwhile, back in Oneonta, fire destroyed the Central Hotel block on the morning of January 16, 1910. Jennings was Johnny-on-the-spot and organized the Main and Dietz Street Improvement Company which immediately began the construction of the Hotel Oneonta building.

The Dietz Street corner of the block had been occupied by the First National Bank, a trusted and respected institution. The history of this bank dates back to 1864 when it was organized at Cooperstown as the Worthington National Bank. In 1871 it was moved here and the name changed to the First National Bank of Oneonta.

The first president after the bank was moved to Oneonta was Hon. John Cope and among the first directors were J. R. Worthington, Cooperstown; John Cope and Dr. Samuel R. Case, Oneonta; Hervey Keyes, Laurens; and Col. S. F. Miller, Franklin. Mr. Cope was succeeded as president by Hon. William H. Snow and he in turn by Ransom Mitchell and Marquis L. Keyes, the latter taking office in 1897.

The bank occupied quarters in several locations until 1887 when the First National Bank building was erected on the south side of Main Street. This is the structure with the pyramid on top. In 1905 the bank moved to the corner store in the Central Hotel block on the corner of Main and Dietz.

When the Hotel Oneonta block was finished in January of 1911, Jennings rented the corner store to the bank, which had moved back to its old location following the fire. At the same time he purchased controlling interest in the First National from the president, M. L. Keyes.

The wheeler-dealer moved fast. He apparently sold assets and replaced them with dubious paper of his New York projects. Within three months the First National Bank closed its doors and on the next day the Mt. Vernon National Bank, which he also owned, shut up shop.

The First National Bank paid 100 cents on the dollar to its depositors. The Mt. Vernon bank paid 15 cents. Jennings was arrested and charged by the Federal authorities with embezzlement. He was tried and convicted and sentenced to six years imprisonment. He died in New York in 1921.

## OLD INDIAN TRAILS

The lithe redskin, clad only in breech clout and moccasins, drank sparingly of the abundant waters flowing from the spring where Ford Avenue now meets Main Street, and rested briefly. He had still some miles to go before he reached the village at the mouth of the Schenevus Creek (now Colliers) where he planned to spend the night.

Starting from the Iroquois headquarters near Onondaga Lake he had been running since dawn and before dark would have covered 100 miles, the "century run" which was the cherished goal of latter day bicyclists.

He had come down the Unadilla River and up the Susquehanna, stopping at each village to spread the word of the council fire to be held at the Long House, and would continue up Schenevus Creek, cross over to the Schoharie Valley and thence proceed to the Mohawk at what is now Schenectady. Behind him the villages were already bustling with preparations for the trek northward.

Oneonta's Main Street was once an Indian trail, a part of the intricate network which bound together the Iroquois Confederacy, one of the world's first attempts at self government. At one time these New York State Indians extended authority over a larger domain than was embraced in the Roman Empire.

The trails which followed the Susquehanna and its tributaries were the main route to the south and west from Central New York. The Susquehanna trails followed both sides of the stream, the one going up the north bank meeting at the mouth of the Unadilla the Oneida trail from the Long House.

Proceeding up the Susquehanna, one trail led to Otsego Lake and Cherry Valley. One went up the Schenevus Creek and crossed over into the Schoharie valley by way of Summit. Another followed the Charlotte into Mohawk country with cross trails to the head of the Delaware and through the Catskills to the flint mines at Cocksackie on the Hudson.

These paths winding through the virgin forests were from 12 to 15 inches wide and were worn to the depth of a foot where the ground was yielding. When the white man came he used many of these paths, oftentimes widening them into roads. Thus did Main Street come into being.

The trail down the river from what is now Colliers went much nearer the river than does Route 7 at present. It came up to the present course of Main Street at approximately where is now Rose Avenue and thence the present thoroughfare follows it almost exactly.

It crossed the marshy lands where the D.&H. is now on a ridge connecting the old Barn Hill with the bluff to the north and continued down the far slope of the hill to the river. Here it divided, one branch going down the near side and the other crossing the stream by means of a ford.

The trails observed by the explorers and missionaries who came into this section in the 1600s had been in use by the Iroquois for about 200 years.

For 3,000 years before that the region had been occupied by successive Algonquin civilizations who left behind them abundant traces of their life here.



## THE MYSTERIOUS VLEI

Want to buy a coal mine? If so, you might consider the Vlei, deep in the woods atop Franklin Mountain, but if it's next year's supply of fuel you're after, perhaps you had best look elsewhere. It will be some millions of years, provided conditions are right, before you can do any digging there.

However, if you want to know what the scenery in Labrador looks like and are anxious to examine the plant life of an arctic clime, the Vlei is just the place for you, for here is a peat tundra, a solitary reminder of the days when most of the vegetation hereabouts was of the Klondike variety.

When the glacier retreated some 50,000 years ago it left a shallow pond where the Vlei is now. As the years sped by, the lake gradually filled with such aquatic plants as pickerel weed, cow lily and iris and submerged plants like nitella and bladderwort. Sphagnum moss developed and gradually the lake filled with vegetation to a depth of several feet with very little open water to be seen.

The black spruces and white pines along the borders of the Vlei scattered their winged seeds and started trees growing in the bog. These are growing bigger and bigger as their roots sink ever deeper in the muck. In some places one can stand some yards away and shake some of the trees by "jouncing the bog."

Sphagnum moss constitutes most of the vegetation. This interesting plant is the greatest former of peat in existence. Given time and sufficient pressure, it becomes bituminous and finally anthracite coal.

Dig it deep enough and you have the same peat moss used on lawns. This is the same moss that was used in place of absorbent cotton during World War I. Because of the antiseptic qualities of this moss, the drinking water used on the long voyages of the old whalers was obtained from peat bogs.

Because the plant cover creates a natural refrigerator keeping the waters always cold, many plants grow there that are normally found only in such frigid countries as Labrador. Here are found cranberries on vines trailing just above the moss, cotton grass, mountain holly and black elder.

Goldthread (once used for sore throat) grows here as do dwarf cornel, or blueberry, and the false hellebore, commonly called skunk cabbage. Here can be found such heath plants as arbutus, wintergreen, Indian pipe, huckleberry, sheep laurel, bog rosemary and the leatherleaf.

Along the edge of the area can be found the swamp honeysuckle or azalea which we usually call the pinkster (pinxter). Purple fringed and Indian pink orchids have been found at the Vlei.

Such curious carnivorous (insect eating) plants as the pitcher plant and the round-head sundew once grew in abundance in the depths of the Vlei but are hard to find now since they need sunshine and various shrubs have spread shade over most of the bog.

The word "Vlei" is probably a contraction of the Dutch word "vallei", meaning a shallow morass on a hill. "Fly" is used interchangeably and hence we have Fly Creek.

## SERVICE IN FOUR WARS

Its guidons now carry a different letter but the local Guard outfit will always be "Company G" to the many now living who served with it during three wars. And in Valhalla it will eternally be "G" to those who went with it into the fields of death and stayed there with the Great Companionship.

Co. C, 2nd Armored Rifle Bn., 108th Infantry, 27th Div. NYARNG, quartered in the State Armory, has a proud heritage going back a century and a half. Four times its citizen members have been called from class room, work bench and office to serve in time of war and their battle record is a gallant one.

In peace time the unit's record has been outstanding and the Armory cases are crowded with trophies. Time after time the company has led the state in marksmanship and twice won the National Defense Trophy for the highest figure of general merit in the state. In 1934 it was cited by the War Department as the "outstanding unit in the National Guard of the entire United States".

Except for the 10 years immediately following the Civil War there has been a militia company in Oneonta for 150 years. The first unit was organized in 1812 with John McDonald as captain. The unbroken history of this outfit can be traced down through the years until the Civil War when it became Co. K of the 76th New York Infantry, which was in the field for nearly four years.

In 1876 the company was reorganized with a roster composed almost entirely of Union veterans. Henry G. Wood was the captain and William H. Morris and Nathan Hemstreet, lieutenants. The outfit drilled in various places until 1885 when the Curtis property at the corner of Academy and Fairview Streets was purchased by popular subscription and the state erected an armory there.

In the Spanish-American War the company, then led by U. A. Ferguson, saw service in Hawaii as Company G, 1st New York Volunteer Infantry. Four members died of disease while the company was away.

The present Armory was erected in 1904 and has been remodeled several times since.

In 1917 the company, as part of the 1st Infantry, NYNG, was ordered to active duty to guard the water supply of New York City and remained on that assignment until it was federalized and sent to Camp Wadsworth, S. C.

Here the regiment was split, part of each company going with the silk stocking 7th of New York City to form the 107th Infantry, 27th Division, and the remainder helping to form the 1st Pioneer Infantry.

The latter group took part in the Aisne-Marne, Oise-Aisne and Meuse-Argonne offensives. The 107th helped break the Hindenburg Line and suffered heavy losses. Company G left 19 men in French graves. The company was taken out by Captain George Keepers and came back under Captain Royal Johnson.

The company was again sworn into Federal service on October 15, 1940 and was at Fort McClelland, Ala., when World War II started. Captain Frank W. McCook was its skipper. In March 1942 the outfit sailed for Hawaii. Its first engagements were at Majuro and Eniwetok and it later fought bloodily on Saipan and Okinawa. Thirteen men who went out with the company failed to return.

Following its return in 1945 the company became a part of the 108th Infantry and about six years ago it was converted into an armored outfit.

## ANDREW BICE SAXTON

The writing of this particular column is a labor of love, for if we have any facility whatever in the use of words, we attribute much of it to the patient and skillful tutelage of Andrew B. Saxton, as fine a gentleman and as able a scholar as we have ever known.

He was no tycoon of business or finance, not a holder of high office, not a man possessed of more than his share of this world's goods. Rather he was a working newspaperman, a country editor of skill and vast discernment, an expert worker in words, samples of whose exquisite handicraft can be found in several anthologies of the best of American verse.

Andrew Bice Saxton was born in 1856 in the town of Middlefield. He was brought up by his maternal grandparents in Westford, where he attended the local schools.

He was a student at Hartwick Seminary for some years and commenced a teaching career in 1875. However, this did not end his education for throughout 15 years of successful teaching he schooled himself in Latin, modern languages, history, science and English literature with the result that he became as well versed in these subjects as any college graduate.

In 1890 George W. Fairchild, who had purchased the Oneonta Herald from Willard E. Yager, made Mr. Saxton editor of this influential weekly newspaper and he held that position for the remainder of his life.

In 1912 the Herald was combined with The Oneonta Daily Star and Mr. Saxton continued as its editor. In addition, he took over the duties of editorial writer and news editor of The Star.

Ill health in 1934 compelled him to relinquish his duties on The Star and most of his Herald responsibilities although he continued as editor until his death two years later.

From 1890 until his demise, a period of over 40 years, he was chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Oneonta Public Library and its successor, the Huntington Memorial Library, contributing greatly to its growth and prestige.

Writing was Andrew Saxton's avocation as well as his vocation. He knew that men live not by bread alone and his off duty writing was largely in the field of poetry. So appealing and expert was his work that his poems attracted national attention and were published frequently in such famous magazines as Harper's, Scribner's and Century.

Several of his poems are to be found in anthologies of American verse. A copy of one of his best known poems, "Since Amy Died", (written following the death of a daughter) was found pasted inside the cap of a much wanted criminal following his capture.

Andrew Saxton was as good a teacher in the city room as in the class room and many a green reporter had his literary faults corrected by this kindly mentor, to whom sloppy writing was an abomination. He was a perfectionist and to him splitting an infinitive ranked with murder and high treason.

And praise from him (he was sparing of it) was, to us at least, the accolade.



## FIGHT FOR THE RAILROAD

The train from Albany stopped in Oneonta only long enough for a group of husky railroad men, armed with pickhandles and wrenches, to climb aboard.

It was August 8, 1869. The comic opera legal battle was over and the physical fight for control of the Albany & Susquehanna railroad (now the D.&H.) was about to begin. On one side was President Joseph Ramsey while on the other was that "improbable rascal", Jim Fisk, acting for Jay Gould, who had become rich, powerful and larcenous since he had left his native Roxbury.

Usually, when Gould decided to steal a railroad he would retire to the basement of his New York office and print enough bogus stock certificates to acquire control. This time he attempted to fleece the towns along the line of the stock which they had purchased to finance the building of the road.

Ramsey refused to transfer the stock which Fisk had secured illegally and a judge on Gould's payroll started issuing court orders right and left. Ramsey also controlled a judge who issued counter injunctions just as fast and a stalemate developed.

Finally Fisk determined to seize physical control of the road in Binghamton and work eastward. Gould controlled the Erie and Binghamton was a strong Erie town so it was easy to take over the A.&S. property there.

Ramsey discovered Fisk's intention and started a trainload of men from Albany at the same time Jubilee Jim sent his army east. The trains made slow progress, Fisk stopping at each station to replace A.&S. employes with Erie men and Ramsey picking up reinforcements at each town.

The company train backed into a siding when it reached Bainbridge and a "frog" was placed on the main line. The Fisk engineer, proceeding at low speed, did not see the obstacle and the locomotive was derailed. The Ramsey men captured the engine and left their opponents stranded.

Fisk raised another army of toughs and started another train east. Meanwhile Ramsey had reinforced his troops to about 400 men. When the opposing trains neared Tunnel they stopped, fearing what might lie in the darkness ahead. Each group sent scouts over the hill who discovered the enemy on the other side. For some hours the stalemate continued while Fisk enlarged his forces to some 800 men.

Finally the Fisk commander loaded 250 men into the train and started through the tunnel. Meanwhile, the Ramsey caravan had gotten under way and the two met headon just east of the entrance. Men swarmed off both trains and the Battle of the Tunnel began.

Clubs and fists swung as the struggle developed into hand-to-hand encounters. The Erie men, many of them drunk, were no match for the Ramseyites, who chased them over the hill. The Erie reserves came to the rescue and another free-for-all started, ending only when the 44th New York militia appeared on the scene.

A new saturnalia of writs began but finally the courts decided in favor of Ramsey, who hurriedly leased the road to the Delaware & Hudson Canal Company in perpetuity, thus putting it beyond the reach of the Erie.

## ST. JAMES CHURCH

The young Episcopal deacon tossed restlessly on his hard pallet in the loft of one of the many log taverns along the Catskill turnpike. He could hear the coaches and freight wagons as they drew up in front of the wilderness hotel and the din from the barroom below him was most disturbing.

What would this frontier town of Oneonta be like? The bishop of New York had told him little. About all he had said was: "Andrew Hull, make ready for a long journey, for I plan to send you to a sparsely settled part of our state, to a struggling little church at Otego. I want you to live there and establish a mission at Oneonta, nearby."

It was 1839. The Otego church was but five years old and although there was an earnest group of Episcopalians in the smaller village of Oneonta, it had no leadership and no place to worship.

The young churchman reached his destination and set to work. That he labored well is evidenced by the fact that today, 123 years later, St. James is a vigorous and influential parish, with a growing list of communicants.

At first services were held in the village school, which stood where Broad Street now meets Main. Soon, through the efforts of Roderick Emmons and other parishioners, a small chapel was erected on Main Street where the eastern part of Woolworth's now is. The chapel was so constructed that it could be used as a rectory when a church should be erected adjacent to it.

Among the pioneer families which worshipped in the little chapel were those of William Angell, Roderick and Carleton Emmons, William Fairchild, Sylvanus Noble and Dr. Samuel H. Case.

Soon after the chapel was built Bishop Onderdonk came on a tour of inspection and confirmed a class of three candidates. Deacon Hull remained but a few months and upon his departure the chapel, which was privately owned, was used for secular purposes, the congregation meeting in other churches and in private halls.

In 1870 the church, then meeting in Blend Hall in the old Wooden Row, was organized as St. James Mission. The next year was one of the most important in the history of the parish. Father Robert Washbon became rector; the parish was legally incorporated, with John Cope as senior warden, Dr. Meigs Case as treasurer and James Cope as clerk; and on June 27 the cornerstone of the present church at the corner of Main and Elm Streets was laid by Bishop Doane.

During the rectorship of Father Daniel Duroe (1885-1889) the church tower was erected, the sanctuary added and the entire church debt paid. The rectory next to the church was finished in 1901 and the Parish House in 1923.

St. James parish has long prided itself upon the beauty of its church. Every window and practically every piece of furniture and religious appurtenance has a memorial significance.

Currently the church structure is much too small and additional land adjacent to the building has been acquired. Under the leadership of the present rector, Father Richard E. Frye, St. James looks forward to more years of growth and usefulness.

## SCANDAL ON THE HILL

Despairing thoughts must have passed through the mind of Dr. James M. Milne as he sat in his Windsor Hotel suite that Sunday morning in February of 1898. The day before, the Local Board of Oneonta State Normal School had replaced him as principal and his distinguished career as an educator would soon end.

As he contemplated the bleak future he most certainly did not entertain the thought that 63 years later his beloved school would occupy a new campus with a complex of buildings, one of which would bear his name.

The principals in one of the most tragic episodes in Oneonta's history are long since dead and time has healed the wounds left by a miniature civil war in which words were used instead of bullets. Only the oldest residents can recall the bitter controversy which rocked the village to its foundations.

Dr. Milne, of Scottish birth, was head of the academic department at Cortland State Normal in 1888 when he was chosen principal of the new Oneonta school. During the next nine years, despite a disastrous fire, he built the school to a commanding position among like institutions and won for himself an enviable reputation as an educator. He was idolized by the students and alumni and had many warm friends in the village.

In the fall of 1897, lightning struck when the Local Board asked for his resignation. No reason was given but the story soon spread that he, a married man, was paying considerable attention to a young lady teacher. There were ugly rumors but no responsible person ever so much as intimated that the relationship was other than perhaps indiscreet.

There were those who thought that faculty power politics was behind the Board's action. Others contended that Milne would not do the bidding of a certain influential member of the Board and that this man wanted his removal. Some thought that the rumors had hurt the school and that for the good of the institution Milne should be replaced.

It did not take long for sides to be chosen and for charges and countercharges to be made. Of the resident members of the Board, William H. Morris, Walter S. Brown, David Whipple, James Stewart and George I. Wilber were against Milne while Willard Yager, George Kirkland, Reuben Reynolds and Judge Hartford Nelson were for him. The faculty was neutral while the student body and alumni were 90 per cent in his corner.

Petitions were signed and protest meetings held. There was hanging of effigies and defacement of homes. A pamphlet was distributed, full of tributes to Milne and demanding to know of what he was accused, who were his accusers and what was the evidence. A public hearing was asked.

Although under heavy pressure, a majority of the Board stuck to its position, admitting that there were no charges and stating that the action taken was for the good of the school. Early in 1898 Dr. P. I. Bugbee was elected principal.

After he left Oneonta, Dr. Milne studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1901, immediately joining a New York firm. He died in 1903 while delivering an address at a Masonic meeting in Waterville.



## WE GET THE SHOPS

Jared Goodyear spent many minutes in hard thought before he signed the paper in front of him, thus assuring Oneonta's future as a railroad town. Had he resisted the arguments of E. R. Ford and Harvey Baker it is more than probable that Colliersville would have had the shops of the Albany & Susquehanna Railroad (now the D.&H.) and would have become the metropolis of the valley.

The document was a contract calling for the purchase of Goodyear's land in Oneonta village (including the site of the Elmore Milling Company) provided the location was found suitable by the A.&S. By signing it he renounced his well founded dream of having the engine house and other buildings erected on his very extensive Colliersville holdings.

Goodyear was one of the incorporators of the road and soon after work was started had agreed to donate the land if the shops were located at the village named after his father-in-law, Peter Collier. The offer was accepted.

The road reached Oneonta in 1865 and was completed to Binghamton three years later. In 1870, following the attempt of Jay Gould to steal the road and make it part of the Erie system, the line was leased in perpetuity to the Delaware & Hudson Canal Company.

In 1867 an engine house was built at Harpursville but the location was unsatisfactory and it was soon moved to Oneonta and reassembled just east of the Main Street grade crossing. This was a small and makeshift affair and it was evident that a new roundhouse, together with buildings for the repair of cars, would have to be built.

E. R. Ford and Harvey Baker, both of whom had worked hard to get the railroad, were most desirous that the shops be located in Oneonta and it was they who persuaded Goodyear to relinquish his Colliersville claim.

In the fall of 1870 the D.&H., having decided to locate the shops in Oneonta provided a suitable site were available, made a careful survey of the property bordering the railroad from the Main Street crossing to the Couse farm at East End but could find no suitable spot.

Baker then took the officials to land which he owned west of Main Street. Much of the ground was swampy and some of it wooded but it was level and could easily be drained and cleared. This was just what the railroad men were looking for and Baker was told that if 20 acres could be obtained and given to the railroad, the engine house would be built there.

A public meeting was held and a committee, with John Cope as treasurer, was appointed to raise money to purchase the land. The job was soon done and the property bought and deeded to the D.&H.

The roundhouse was started in October of 1870 and its construction was expedited. Brick for the structure was made at the Richards plant near the present lower viaduct and the stone and cement came from Howe's Cave quarry. The construction of a car repair shop and other buildings soon followed.

Through the years additional land was acquired, the yards extended and more buildings put up, including, in 1906, the largest roundhouse in the world.

## *FAIRCHILD AND IBM*

"I am organizing a company to be known as Computing-Tabulating-Recording. Invest \$2,000 and I think that I can make you some money but don't do it if you can't afford to lose."

The man who was talking thus to his Oneonta friends in 1911 was George W. Fairchild. Those who followed his advice became millionaires, for C-T-R was to become IBM, the Cinderella of industrial corporations.

The life of George Winthrop Fairchild follows the storybook formula of success. He was born in Oneonta in 1854 of "poor but honest parents". At 13 he left school to support his mother, first doing farm work at \$8 a month and then becoming a printer's apprentice with the Oneonta Herald at \$3 a week.

He was a master printer at 17 and a year later was shop foreman for the Bainbridge Republican. Then the wanderlust hit him and for some years he was a tramp printer, traveling from city to city throughout the east and middle west, finally to return to Oneonta and become foreman of the Herald shop.

Fairchild saved his money, invested it shrewdly and was soon able to buy an interest in the paper. Eventually he was to become its editor and sole owner. His first big chance came when he became interested in the manufacture and sale of an automatic press invented by a Worcester man, D. T. Erickson. Fairchild went to London and sold the English rights for \$100,000. The money was deposited in a British bank which failed the next day, thus wiping out the profit which would have put the company upon its feet.

In 1891 George Fairchild married Josephine Mills Sherman, the daughter of a prosperous Davenport farmer. She had just been willed a considerable sum by an uncle who had been one of the original '49ers and this gave the young publisher access to capital which he soon put to use.

Harlow Bundy, a former Oneonta lawyer and postmaster who married a granddaughter of the pioneer E. R. Ford, was manufacturing in Binghamton a time recording device invented by his brother, Willard. Money was needed for expansion and Bundy turned to his old friend, George Fairchild, who made an initial investment of \$8,000 and became a director of the Bundy Time Recording Co.

Out of this concern grew the International Time Recording Co. with Fairchild as its president. In 1911 the printer turned industrialist put together ITR, the Tabulating Machine Co. and several scale companies to form C-T-R, which was to become the fabulously successful IBM. Fairchild was its first president and later chairman of the board.

In 1905 George Fairchild was elected to the Congress from the 34th district comprising Otsego, Delaware, Chenango, Ulster and Schoharie counties. He served with great distinction for six terms, becoming the ranking member of the potent Ways and Means committee.

George W. Fairchild died in New York on December 31, 1924, and was buried in Oneonta. His only son, Sherman Mills Fairchild, an inventive genius, followed in his father's financial footsteps and is now one of the wealthiest men in the country.

## GERMAN SABOTAGE

The day operative at the Elmore Milling Company on a January morning in 1918 was about to start his grinding machine when he caught a glint of metal in the hopper. Plunging his hand into the flour dust, he found a 12 gauge, loaded shotgun shell practically on top of the grinding plates.

What would have happened if the shell had been drawn into the whirling cutters is problematical, but almost certainly the sparks struck from the clashing metal would have caused a fire. There could conceivably have been an explosion since dust under certain conditions is as dangerous as gunpowder.

The investigation which ensued unearthed a neat little cloak and dagger plot of German intrigue and sabotage during World War I. As a result, three German nationals left Oneonta in the custody of U. S. marshals, bound for Atlanta and internment.

It was evident that the shell, found beneath the screen and the magnets designed to keep nails and other metal objects from contact with the plates, was not there through accident. The employees were questioned by the police and it developed that Otto Matthes, a young German alien on the night shift, had gone home early the evening before, complaining of a toothache. It was also found that he had told a fellow worker that he was afraid of being arrested as a German spy.

The police hurried to his rooming place on Dietz Street and found him just leaving, packed bag in hand. He was arrested and held pending the arrival of Federal officials.

The story does not end here, however. In 1914 the Bauer Chemical Company, a German pharmaceutical firm, located in Oneonta, and built a plant on Reynolds Street for the manufacture of Sanatogen, a health food made from milk. At the time the United States entered the war against the Central Powers, the manager of this plant was an alien German named Karl von Hartmann.

After the attempt to fire the Elmore mill, a close check was made on the back-grounds and activities of all enemy aliens in the area. Von Hartmann was caught in the net and it soon developed that he was a major in the Imperial German army and that he was the paymaster for the saboteurs working hereabouts. He, too, was given a conducted trip to Atlanta.

The third man to travel south under escort was one von Hartung, a young German working in the D.&H. yards in a position which gave him knowledge of troop movements and the shipment of war supplies. It was found that he was a lieutenant in the Kaiser's army and a member of the ring.

The assets of the Bauer Chemical Company were taken over by the Custodian of Alien Property and sold to the William R. Warner Company, an American concern which operated the plant until 1922, when the business was discontinued.

The sabotage incidents intensified locally a suspicion of everyone and everything of Germanic origin which was as unfair as it was unreasoning. German was dropped from the high school curriculum and songs written by Germans were no longer sung. Fortunately, such absurdities soon disappeared when the war was over.



## FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

The 17 persons (nine of them Yagers) who met in the Presbyterian church on April 24, 1833, and organized the First Baptist Church of Oneonta were earnest Christians but with little money. The little group struggled along for about a year, holding services in the red schoolhouse where Broad Street now meets Main, and then Eliakim Reed Ford joined the flock.

According to a contemporary report, "There was quite a little strife between the Presbyterians and the Baptists to get Mr. Ford." James Slade, a Baptist deacon, was Mr. Ford's brother-in-law and it might have been through his influence that the first citizen of the village became a Baptist.

The advent of this influential and dynamic citizen gave a decided impetus to the church. In 1834 a church building was erected near the brink of the Grove Street hill, facing Main across a tree filled park.

In 1883 the Rev. E. D. Clough became pastor and soon began an extensive program of improvements to the church property. The land fronting on Main Street was sold, the building was moved back and an auditorium and baptistry facing Grove Street were added. The old section was converted into Sunday School rooms, a dining room and a kitchen. The total expense was \$7,074.

In September of 1896 Rev. Dr. Edson J. Farley entered upon the longest pastorate in the history of the church. This remarkable person was one of the most beloved men ever to live in Oneonta and during his tenure of 37 years the church increased greatly in size, financial stability and Christian influence.

Dr. Farley was educated at Colgate Academy, Madison (now Colgate) University, and Hamilton Theological Seminary. In 1916 his Alma Mater honored him with the degree of Doctor of Divinity. Before coming to Oneonta, Dr. Farley had served pastorates in South New Berlin, Stillwater and Malone.

During Dr. Farley's first two years, the church increased in size from 491 to more than 800 members. In 1902 Henry Saunders, the church treasurer for many years, announced that a new church structure would be built.

Said Mr. Saunders: "It has been on our minds for some time that we should have a new house of worship, but many of us saw no way to bring this worthy cause to consummation. Not so with our pastor, who not only thought, but believed that we could accomplish the task if we put our shoulders to the wheel, and lifted with all our strength. The purpose is now taking form."

E. R. Ford's son, Dewitt, gave the money for a site at the corner of Chestnut and Academy Streets and William H. Smith, John R. Skinner, Luzerne Westcott, Fred H. Whitcomb and Joseph S. Lunn were chosen as a building committee.

The structure was completed in November, 1903, and soon thereafter the Watkins home adjacent on Chestnut Street was purchased and converted into a parsonage. In 1923 a Sunday School room was added and other extensive alterations made to the church.

Dr. Farley retired in 1933 at the time of the 100th anniversary of the church. He died on July 9, 1940.

Rev. Robert W. Hodges is the present pastor, presiding over the devotions and religious activities of more than 600 members.

## *THE OLD U. & D.*

It seems probable that quite a few residents are unaware of the fact that Oneonta is served by two railroads. The D.&H. makes its presence known to everyone but the Catskill Branch of the New York Central enters the city in a relatively remote section of East End, employs few Oneonta people and is seldom discussed or written about.

And yet in the days when it was the Ulster and Delaware this railroad, which runs to Kingston through the heart of the Catskills, was an important transportation unit with several passenger and freight trains running each day.

Time was when a solid Pullman train ran daily between Oneonta and New York with one car going through to Philadelphia.

In the days before the motor car it was the only way, except by horse drawn vehicle, to get into the Catskills and during the summer its trains were crowded with vacationers from New York. The railroad provided the only feasible method of getting milk out of a large section of Delaware County. In its heyday an average of 26 carloads of milk passed daily over the route.

Most of the blue stone that composed "the sidewalks of New York" started its journey on the U.&D. from the quarries and finishing mills at Stony Hollow, Phoenicia and Alaben. Without the road it would have been very difficult to build the dams at Ashokan and Gilboa since it was the only way to get heavy equipment and materials to the dam sites.

Work was started on the Ulster and Delaware at the Kingston end in 1873 but it did not reach Oneonta until 1900. In 1874 the rails reached Stamford, which remained the western terminus for years. In 1886 Hobart was reached and in 1892 Bloomville. It was eight years before the first train of five passenger coaches and two baggage cars with John Rothery at the throttle of No. 9 pulled into the Oneonta station on Railroad Avenue on July 15, 1900.

From Phoenicia a branch led 21 miles into the mountains to Kaaterskill whence Catskill could be reached via the Otis Elevating Railroad down the mountain. Another branch led to Hunter.

With the coming of the motor age and the completion of the water supply dams the Ulster and Delaware gradually lost its patronage. Milk tank trucks took over the transportation of milk. Buses and private cars served the resort areas better than could the railroad. Financial troubles beset the road and in 1932 it went on the block and was sold to the New York Central.

In 1954 the last passenger train left Oneonta for Kingston, ending an era to which many Oneontans will look back with nostalgia. Freight is still carried on the road but the days of its glory are far behind.

## BIRTH OF A CITY

As the bells in the clock tower atop the Westcott block sounded midnight a new year, 1909, was born and a new city, Oneonta, the 46th in the state, came into being.

For years the citizens of the village had dreamed of the day when they could boast of being city folks. At a public meeting on the evening of January 10, 1908, the matter was discussed at length. It was decided not to have a referendum on the question but those present favored the idea so strongly (114 to 22) that the village trustees voted to go ahead.

A bill creating the City of Oneonta was introduced in the state legislature. It passed and was signed by Governor Charles E. Hughes on May 21.

An election for city officials was held that fall and Albert Morris was chosen as the first mayor. Elected as members of the Common Council were Fred N. Clark, first ward; John M. Brandow, second ward; William H. Smith, third ward; Fred N. VanWie, fourth ward; Merlin J. Platt, fifth ward; and Edward J. House, sixth ward.

The mayor and three of the aldermen, Brandow, Smith and VanWie, were Republicans. Clark, Platt and House were Democrats, thus creating the situation of an evenly divided Council which has plagued other mayors through the years.

Other elective officials were W. Irving Bolton, city judge; Clarence D. Sewell, city chamberlain; and Morris Ackley and J. Henry Potter, assessors.

The list of appointments made by Mayor Morris contained many names that will be remembered by old timers. A. J. Bookhout was the first commissioner of charities and William H. Johnson the first city attorney. Everett B. Holmes was city clerk and O. M. Johnson prosecuting attorney.

Since 1909 some of the city commissions have been consolidated. As originally constituted they were composed as follows, the first named being chairman:

Police—Dr. A. W. Cutler, W. W. Capron, A. L. Judd, M. O. Multer; Fire—D. A. Diefendorf, George B. Baird, C. A. Borst, Thomas Glenn; Civil Service—S. R. Barnes, T. W. Stevens, F. H. Rowe; Health—Albert B. Tobey, F. H. Bresee, Walter Scott, George Kirkland, Merton Ford.

Public Works—J. L. Bowdish, Joseph S. Lunn, W. R. Saxton, Charles M. Wright; Library—Alva Seybolt, Arthur M. Curtis, George W. Fairchild, Andrew B. Saxton, Willard E. Yager.

In those days the educational system was under city supervision and the Board of Education was appointed by the mayor. The first board consisted of John R. Skinner, Henry Saunders, Henry Bull, J. A. Cross, Arthur Ford and Frank McFee.

In 1909 the fledgling city had a population of 9,491. The assessed valuation of property was \$3,606,380 as compared to \$20,029,053 today. The total tax levy was \$67,243.20. The 1961 city, county and library taxes amounted to \$800,078.94.



## A. L. KELLOGG

They said that Otsego County Judge A. L. Kellogg couldn't possibly be nominated as supreme court justice. Most of the political leaders of the Sixth Judicial District were backing other candidates and scarcely a newspaper was for him.

But "Link" Kellogg hadn't arrived at where he was through any addiction to defeatism. He took to the hustings and rode the 10 counties of the district by day and by night; by automobile and by trolley, by horse and buggy and afoot. He talked to farmers and mechanics, to preachers and lawyers and storekeepers.

It was a long time before the bosses got over the trimming they took in that 1917 primary from the brash Oneonta attorney. His subsequent election in the heavily Republican district was a matter of course.

Abraham Lincoln Kellogg was born on May 1, 1860, in Croton (now Treadwell). He was graduated from the Delaware Literary Institute at Franklin and then studied law, being admitted to the bar in 1883.

Coming at once to Oneonta, he was elected in his first year here as town corporation counsel. This was followed by a year as clerk of the state Senate. In 1886 he served as clerk of the Otsego County Board of Supervisors and in 1894 was a member of the state Constitutional Convention.

He became connected with the state attorney general's office in 1898 and served brilliantly for several years, earning a state-wide reputation for his successful prosecution of cases under the bankruptcy and pure food laws.

Mr. Kellogg was elected in 1907 as the last supervisor to represent the town of Oneonta before the village became a city.

His career on the bench began in 1908 when he was elected county judge, a position he held until he took office as a supreme court justice on January 1, 1918. He left the bench in 1930 upon reaching the mandatory retirement age of 70. Thereafter until his death he was an official referee of the court.

During World War I Justice Kellogg was active on many segments of the home front and following the conflict compiled a list of all Otsego County soldiers, sailors and civilian workers.

His interest in education was a lifetime avocation. In 1927 he helped organize the central school at Treadwell which now bears his name. He presented the school with a \$15,000 park for athletic and other purposes, donated a farm for the use of the agricultural department and provided an endowment of \$125,000 for maintenance purposes. Other gifts followed through the years.

He was one of the early backers of Hartwick College and the first subscriber of \$10,000 to help secure the school. For years he was president of the Board of Trustees. Several prizes at OHS were donated by him.

Justice Kellogg was early active in the volunteer fire department, a hook and ladder company being named for him. He was a 50-year Mason, an Elk, a Kiwanian, a member of the Oneonta and Country Clubs and the first president of the Otsego County Bar Association. From 1934 until his death in 1946 at the age of 86, he was a director of IBM.

## BLIZZARD OF 1857

"We have mentally resolved hereafter to include April among winter months and upon no pretext whatever to indulge in any hopes of milder weather earlier than the first of June. In the meantime it is the third week in April and there never was a better prospect of six weeks' sleighing than today. Delicious Spring, charming April!"

This editorial observation has a contemporary ring but it was written over 100 years ago, appearing in the *Oneonta Herald* on April 22, 1857, following the heaviest snowfall which this region has experienced in historic times.

Much more is heard about the Blizzard of 1888 since it was within the memory of many now living, but for sheer amount of snow the great storm of 1857 has never been equalled. For five days the white stuff fell almost continuously, piling up to depths of from five to eight feet on the level.

The storm started early on the morning of April 13 and continued until the 18th. The weather remained raw and cold until well after the middle of May and the snow melted slowly so that there was only slight flooding.

The snow was unusually heavy (about 20 pounds to the cubic foot). It did not drift as in '88 but its weight caused the collapse of hundreds of sheds, barns and flat-topped houses. Many horses, cows and sheep were killed when roofs fell in and others perished in the fields.

The feeding of livestock became a serious problem and the price of hay rose to \$40 a ton. Many a family sacrificed its straw mattresses so that the contents might be fed to stock.

For weeks the country presented an almost uniform pattern of white with fences and roads entirely covered. The glare of the sun upon the snow was so intense that men as well as women wore veils to protect their eyes.

For over a week only one stage (from Deposit) got through with mail. It took the four horse coach nine hours to cover the six miles from Otego. For ten days the principal occupation of every man, woman and child was shoveling snow. Food did not become a problem since in those days people did not live from grocery counter to mouth. Home larders were generally full.

One amusing incident has been told through the years. Peter Brink, a prominent resident of the region, frequently entertained his neighbors in his double log cabin with dances at which he fiddled and "called off". When roads became passable after the storm, he devised a method of replenishing his supply of fodder for his stock.

He announced that he would give a dance at which the price of admission would be a bundle of rye straw. To receive the expected bountiful supply he built a pen just outside the door.

When the first man arrived with his bundle of straw, Pete told him to put it in the pen and come in. Each male guest was greeted similarly. When the party was over Pete went outside to view his treasure. He found just one armful of straw in the enclosure. Each guest had used the same bundle.

## OUR FIRST CONGRESSMAN

Oneonta's first Congressman died in want and loneliness in a hotel room.

And yet there was a day when Colonel Snow had wealth, influence and power. Teacher, contractor, manufacturer, merchant, farmer, land owner and politician, this New Englander was for years one of the most prominent citizens of his adopted village.

William W. Snow was born in Heath, Mass., in 1812. In 1831 he left his birthplace to seek his fortune "in the West", which meant New York State beyond the Schoharie Valley.

Oneonta evidently looked good to him and here he settled. He had learned the trade of wool dressing and after a brief spell of teaching, he became associated with the wool carding and cloth finishing mill built by James McDonald on Main Street just below the grist mill.

After some years in this business, he started a tin and hardware store. During his spare time he was a contractor and built (in 1839) the school which stood for many years on Grove Street opposite the church.

In 1872 he bought the Seeley Wood farm for \$13,000 and spent most of the remainder of his active life in agricultural pursuits and in developing and selling his land for residential purposes.

This farm was based on the white columned farmhouse at the corner of West and Chestnut Streets now occupied by radio station WDOS. The farm included much of the hill to the north of West Street and stretched beyond the railroad tracks. Much of Clinton Street was a part of the farm as well as portions of such "lower deck" streets as Miller, Fonda Avenue and West Broadway.

Colonel Snow was early a leader in the Democratic party and held many public offices, including inspector of public schools, water commissioner, village trustee and supervisor. In 1844 he was elected to the Assembly and in 1855 to the Congress from the district comprising Otsego and Schoharie counties.

Colonel Snow's Oneonta activities were not confined to politics. He worked to bring the railroad to Oneonta. For some years he was president of the First National Bank and in 1876 was elected head of the Union Agricultural Society which ran the Oneonta Fair.

The record does not indicate what his connection was with the volunteer fire department but when the village's first steam fire engine was purchased, it was called, by unanimous vote of the firemen, the "Colonel Snow."

But evil days fell upon this good man. His wife died, his children moved away and unfortunate investments forced him to sell his property at a loss.

Having sold his home to M. L. Keyes, he moved into a room at the Susquehanna House. Here he died in 1886. Said the Oneonta Herald:

"With the influx of strangers and the rapid expansion of the village, the Colonel seemed to lose his old time activity and was kindly regarded as a link connecting the present with the past. He was a good man, kindly and honorable and many regretted his loss of fame and fortune."

To which we add: "So passes the glory of the world!"



## THE WESTCOTT CLAN

If you are a descendant of one of the early settlers in Oneonta or vicinity, that banker in Minneapolis or bartender in Keokuk whose forbears once lived hereabouts is probably your cousin.

Quite naturally there was extensive intermarrying between the pioneer families and as a result present day relationships are so complicated that it would take a battery of Philadelphia lawyers to straighten them out.

A case in point is the Westcott family, early settlers in the town of Milford. Many prominent residents of Oneonta and vicinity, as well as of other communities throughout the land, claim descent from those hardy men and women who broke the wilderness and tamed the wild countryside.

Two mayors of the city of Oneonta, Albert Morris and Dorr S. Hickey, had Westcott blood in their veins, and two others, Joseph S. Lunn and James Georgeson, married into the clan.

In 1783, when the present towns of Milford and Oneonta were in the old township of Suffrage, James Westcott and his father-in-law, Thomas Mumford, came on horseback from Bennington, Vt., and bought land of Major Matthew Cully in what is now Milford Center.

Mumford settled on the purchase but Westcott did not join him until 12 years later when he occupied a farm somewhat south of that of his father-in-law. In the same year of 1795 Westcott's younger brother, Benjamin, came from Cheshire, Mass., and opened a blacksmith shop at Barnesville. In 1806 he moved to a farm near Portlandville.

In 1815 another brother, Reuben, sold his father's farm at Cheshire and moved to Milford. He settled on a large farm between Milford Center and Edson Corners and the large house which he built in 1822 is still standing and is one of the oldest structures in the upper Susquehanna valley.

A sister of the Westcott brothers, Dorcas, married Walter Finch of Portlandville. The three brothers and their sister had 33 children, most of them boys. Soon there were more than 70 grandchildren and the hills were full of Westcotts.

Captain Joseph Westcott, a son of James and a veteran of the War of 1812, ran in 1805 one of the first stores in what is now Oneonta. This log structure stood on the corner of the Indian trail that became Main Street, and Bronson Lane, now Maple Street. The Main Street Baptist church now occupies the site.

Munro and Luzerne Westcott, both descendants of Reuben, were prominent in the business life of Oneonta for many years. They built the business block on Main Street atop which is the Town Clock. Cyrus Westcott, a descendant of Benjamin, was another well known Oneontan. Albert and William Morris, both prominent here for years, were of the Reuben line.

Some of the families allied to the Westcotts by marriage were Mumford, Rose, Bates, Morris, Lunn, VanWoert, Cooke, Squires, Babcock, Barney, Wilcox, Townsend, Rockwell, Davenport and Sweet.

## THE FIRST HOUSE

No, Virginia, that sound you hear echoing down through the years from that fateful April of 1775 is not "the shot heard 'round the world" but rather the crack of John Vanderwerker's axe as it bit into the huge hemlocks which covered the Susquehanna river flats.

While the minutemen were battling the redcoats at Lexington and Concord, this sturdy pioneer was making a clearing and preparing to build the first structure to be erected within the limits of what is now Oneonta.

Early in 1775 John Martin Vanderwerker, a resident of Sharon, Schoharie County, purchased 200 acres of the Wallace patent embracing most of what is now Neahwa Park as well as goodly portions of the present uptown Oneonta.

In April of 1775 he came alone down the river to visit his new possessions. He was a widower and had several grown children whom he desired to settle on his lands. He evidently remained here several months, making a clearing in the dense hemlock forest some yards south of the present Elmore mill.

John returned to Sharon and in the fall of 1775 came back to his lands, bringing with him his son, Joachim, and the latter's wife. They built a temporary log structure in which they passed the winter and in the spring of 1776 erected a permanent log house, the site of which is marked by a monument near the Neahwa Place entrance to the park.

In this rude structure Joachim's wife gave birth to the first white child born in the town of Oneonta, Dorcas Vanderwerker, who was to become the wife of Tice Couse, a famous Indian hunter in his day. Most authorities give the date of birth as 1782 but Willard V. Huntington says it was 1776 and presents as proof the fact that she died near Oneonta in 1882 at the age of 106.

John Vanderwerker soon left for service in the Revolution, becoming a captain in Colonel John Harper's regiment. It is probable that Joachim and the other members of the family followed him out of the valley since there is no good evidence that there were any settlers hereabouts during most of the war.

Following the end of hostilities the Vanderwerkers returned, bringing with them parts for a grist mill which they erected on the river just above the present tail race. Anchor ice in the winter and floods in the spring prevented efficient operation of the mill and in 1805 it was sold to Joseph McDonald who dismantled it and used what parts he needed in a mill which he built on Silver Creek near the present site of the Elmore mill.

The Vanderwerkers were a remarkably long lived family if certain reports can be believed. John, the original pioneer, is said to have died in Laurens at the fabulous age of 115. Joachim, who after he sold the mill lived for some time on what was later known as the David Orr farm, lived to be over 100. His son, John, a veteran of the War of 1812, is said to have been 110 at the time of his demise. It is known that the sister, Dorcas Couse, died in 1882 at the age of 106.

## A DAY IN 1911

August 18, 1911, was a day like all days. It was a day of accomplishment and a day of frustration; a day of joy and a day of tragedy. Babies were born, young lovers were wed and old folks fulfilled their life span and passed into the beyond.

What went on in Oneonta just a half century ago? What were the events of a single day in that time which seems so long ago?

There had been a severe drought which worried the farmers and townspeople but on the afternoon of the 15th: "J. Pluvius returned from his vacation and from the top of Olympus emptied all the buckets that were handy on the city."

Things were quiet on the national and international scene in those golden days of peace and plenty. Perhaps the most sensational news of the day was that an aviator had flown non-stop from Chicago to Elkhart, Indiana, a distance of 101 miles, in two hours and 16 minutes.

Politics was in the air as Republicans and Democrats squared away for the mayoralty election. It was rumored that Prof. Frank Blodgett of the Normal faculty would head the elephant ticket while the donkey followers would nominate Attorney George L. Gibbs. (So it was to be and in November Blodgett won.)

That afternoon the Oneonta baseball team of Brown University players defeated the Morris squad of college stars, 4-3, behind the one-hit pitching of Conzelman (later to play with the Pittsburgh Pirates). Behind him were such men as Ken and Reggie Nash, McGurty, Snell, Raymond and Staff.

The main topic of conversation about the streets was the dogfight at the Common Council meeting the night before. The \$7,600 bond issue for paving proposed by Mayor Albert Morris was the bone of contention, with the three Republican aldermen supporting it and the three Democrats opposing. Tempers were lost and much bitter language used during the stormy session, which lasted until midnight.

The only business transacted was a decision to hold a special election on a proposal to spend \$6,500 to expand the River Street school (it won) and the appointment of a committee to study the possibility of a municipal lighting plant.

The Oneonta Department Store was offering men's work shirts for 29 cents and at Carr & Bull's you could buy boys' suits for as little as \$2.50. Your mother could buy a suit at Ronan Brothers for \$4.98 while your old man need only pay \$10.98 at the Bell Clothing Company for his outfit. Terrell & Campbell was advertising bacon at 18 cents a pound and hamburg at two pounds for a quarter.

Evidently there was no lack of work, for the D.&H. was advertising immediate jobs for 100 men. There were six passenger trains daily each way on the D.&H. with the same number, including one solid Pullman, on the U.&D. (now the Catskill branch of the New York Central).

There were movies and vaudeville three times daily at the Oneonta Theatre for 10 cents admission. Oh, yes, we almost forgot to mention that the Chamber of Commerce, noting that \$10,000 was spent annually in the city for beer, was trying to locate a brewery here.



## WALLING VS. WILBER

If Mrs. Elevia Ett Walling had not objected to the digging of a ditch across her property without her permission, it is entirely possible that Oneonta would not now have its beautiful Wilber Park.

The story begins in 1881 when the village water supply system was started with the building of a reservoir on the Richardson property at the head of Oneonta Creek. The water main came down the stream and about where the proposed High School site is, branched into two 10-inch pipes, one seeking the East Street level and the other going down through what is now Wilber Park.

Owners of the land through which the mains were to pass willingly gave easements that the village might have an adequate water supply. Among them was J. R. L. Walling, whose extensive land holdings included practically all of the present park.

In 1906 when the first filter plant was built, a 16-inch main was laid along the East Street route and the pipe through the Walling lands was abandoned. By 1913 the distribution system had proved inadequate and it was decided by the Oneonta Water Company, a private corporation controlled by George I. Wilber, to lay a 16-inch main through the Walling property in a new location.

The water officials contended that the old easement gave them the right to lay a new pipe wherever they pleased and started to dig without bothering to consult Elevia Walling, widow of J.R.L.

They reckoned without that doughty lady, however. She had a mind of her own and, although admitting that a new pipe could be laid legally along the line of the old, absolutely refused to allow the company to dig a fresh ditch. When the work continued, she secured an injunction, which stopped proceedings. An endeavor by Wilber to vacate the injunction met with a court rebuff.

Wilber then sued Mrs. Wilber for the right to use the new location, claiming the right of eminent domain on the ground that a pipe near the old main would result in less water head and decreased pressure.

The court held against the banker, holding that the right of eminent domain could be claimed by a private company only if the public interest were adversely affected and pointing out that the old route would lower the water head by only one foot and the pressure by only 43/100 of a pound.

George I. Wilber, not at all accustomed to having his will thwarted, then tried to buy the land from Mrs. Walling, offering her \$20,000. But the old lady had her dander up and flatly refused to sell.

George I. had another arrow in his quiver, however, and this one had a war head. He offered to pay the court award up to \$20,000 if the city would condemn the property for park purposes. The Common Council accepted and in 1916 the property was condemned at a price of \$22,600, all of which Wilber paid.

In his will the financier created a fund to provide \$3,000 annually for 30 years, the money to be used for capital improvements in the park. He also gave the city his controlling interest in the water company. The city bonded to buy the remaining shares, retiring the indebtedness with revenues from the water system.

## BRIGHAM AND WIRELESS

"The wireless receiving station of Jeweler R. E. Brigham is now tuned up to absolute perfection and twice daily the messages are received from far off Arlington, Va., of the correct time according to the government standard clocks at the Naval Observatory there."

This item, which appeared in the Oneonta Herald in 1913, concerns the first messages received in Otsego County without the aid of wires. The messages were only time signals but they marked the birth of radio in the area.

Russell E. Brigham not only pioneered wireless telegraphy hereabouts but he had the first wireless telephone (radio) set, held the first amateur radio license in the county and did the first broadcasting—some 20 years before WDOS went on the air.

In 1913 there were hundreds of railroad men living in Oneonta and Mr. Brigham was an official watch inspector. It was necessary for him to have his chronometer as accurate as possible and so he set up the wireless station. The antenna was a huge affair, stretching from a 20-foot mast on the top of his store to a similar pole atop the Windsor Hotel.

After this country entered World War I in 1917, all amateurs were required to dismantle their equipment. In 1919, soon after the end of the war, Mr. Brigham installed the first wireless telephone set in the section. This was a crystal affair. At first the only messages he could get were from coastal ships experimenting with the new device.

He next acquired a DeForest Ultraudion, the first detector operated with vacuum tubes. On July 2, 1921, he heard the Dempsey-Carpentier prize fight, the first sport broadcast in history. Among his valued possessions is a certificate from the National Amateur Wireless Association attesting to the fact that he had participated in the "simultaneous transmission of the human voice to 300,000 persons."

About 1922 Mr. Brigham secured a General Electric receiving and broadcasting set which he installed in the cellar of his home at 67 Elm Street. By this time Station KDKA in Pittsburgh was broadcasting musical programs. Many an Oneontan, including your columnist, was initiated into the mysteries of radio in the Brigham basement. He did some broadcasting of music but the government directed frequent changes of wave length and he soon abandoned this phase of radio.

Among other early radio enthusiasts were Arnold Wildgrube and Lee Crouch. The latter manufactured a radio, the Clara-Dyne, in Oneonta for many years.

Russell E. Brigham has been long out of the radio game but various other extracurricular activities have kept him young in spirit. He was for some years an alderman and then mayor of the city. He was a crack bowler and is one of the city's most ardent devotees of tournament bridge. For 40 years he has played correspondence chess with men all over the world and always has four or five games going simultaneously.

## PIONEER NAMES VANISH

It seems incredible that of the 15 men who in 1848 made up the first government of Oneonta village, only three have descendants still living in the city. Most of them spent their lives here and several had large families but the blood of only three—Elisha Shepherd, John Cutshaw and Harvey Baker—now flows in the veins of Oneontans.

Shepherd and Cutshaw were assessors. The former ran a famous still under the bank to the left of where River Street starts uphill to meet Route 7. His daughter married Newton I. Ford, a cousin of the pioneer, E. R. Ford. Their Oneonta descendants are Mrs. Albert S. Nader, Mrs. Herbert B. Plantz and LeRoy S. House, Jr.

Cutshaw was a shoemaker who lived in the house now standing just to the left of the Victory Supermarket on Chestnut Street. For many years he was the sexton of the First Presbyterian Church. William P. Abbott, 8 Reynolds Avenue, is his great-grandson.

The third official with Oneonta progeny was Street Commissioner Harvey Baker, a millwright, bridge and railroad builder and local historian. Raymond and John Baker, proprietors of the Baker Hardware Company, are his great-grandsons.

The other 12 officials were also men who left their mark upon the community. The first president of the village was Eliakim Reed Ford, merchant, promotor and the most prominent local citizen of the time. The other trustees were Hezekiah Watkins, William S. Fritts, Samuel J. Cook and William Bronson.

Watkins was a noted stage coach operator and mail contractor. His son Timothy gave the family name to Watkins Avenue, which he laid out through his farm. Fritts, who lived on the site of the Dentists Building on Chestnut Street, was a tailor. His son, Charles Edgar Fritts, made possible the talking motion picture through his inventions.

Cook was a merchant and Bronson a farmer whose holdings fronted Main Street between the farms of E. R. Ford and Joseph Walling. Maple Street, which ran through his property, was once called Bronson's Lane.

An assessor, Ephraim Hodge, combined the occupations of farmer, minister and inventor. He had a farm in the East End section, served Baptist churches at West Oneonta and Otsdawa and invented the first reversible plow.

William Olin, the first village clerk, was an attorney who later became a physician. John McCraney, the collector, was the husband of the notorious woman who, although acquitted, was generally believed to have murdered her stepdaughter, another girl and a former husband.

Andrew G. Shaw, the village treasurer, was an attorney who lived for many years in a house on River Street on the site of the Oneonta Tire & Auto Parts. Dr. Hosea Hamilton, a street commissioner, had his office and home where the Sears store is now.

The Huntington brothers, Collis and Solon, were both in the first village government, Collis as a street commissioner and Solon as poundmaster. Collis, who lived where Loblaw's Supermarket now stands, went west in '49 and became the builder of the Central Pacific Railroad and the founder of one of the great American fortunes. Solon's home was the present Huntington Library, given to Oneonta by his son Henry, one of the world's great art collectors.



## EARLY OHS BASKETBALL

There was quite a crowd of students surrounding the two boys as they fought it out on the Oneonta High School lawn that winter's noon in 1918. The most interested (and important) spectator was Superintendent of Schools George J. Dann, who had a fine view of the fisticuffs from his office window.

When the lads returned to classes they were summoned to "the office" and summarily suspended from participation in all school activities. That was bad enough for the boys but for Coach Ernest (Dutch) Damaschke it spelled disaster, for one of the pugilists was the star playmaker and the other the crack shot of one of the best basketball teams in OHS history.

The members of that outfit, which beat Schenectady (Oneonta's big rival in those days) for the first time ever were Jim Tamsett, Stu Keenan, George West, Stan Martin and Ron Slade.

Basketball in Oneonta started in 1905 when a squad of only six men represented the school in games played in the State Armory and on the stage of the Oneonta Theatre. The pioneers were Bert Hoye, Leon Roarick, John Carson, Harry Parish, Charles Woodworth and Harold Ford. The manager was Harry Stranahan.

There is no record of any basketball activity at the school from that date until 1908 when the opening of the gymnasium in the new school was celebrated by a 33-10 victory over the Cooperstown Gym team. The players in the Oneonta lineup (nattily attired in royal blue and white jerseys draped over knee length khaki knickerbockers) were Floyd Crouch, Grover Silliman, Bert Hoye, Ned Olin, Ray Maure, Guilford Dickinson and Ray Whitaker.

Other players of the period before and around World War I whose names come to mind were Bill Stratton, Stubby Parks, Stan Pendleton, Towy Ackart, Dewey Thomas, Stu Butts, Lee Houghtaling, Bill Warburton, Skeet Fletcher, Monte Paige, Herb and Damon Getman, Carl Disbrow, Wally Woodworth, Ev Kniskern, Jim Perry, Ev Westcott, Jay Farmer, Chan House, Clark McPherson, Stu Peck, Claude Gregory, Clarence Graves, Leon Hamilton and Harold Lord.

The game played in those days was quite different from that of today. After each basket the ball was returned for a center jump. Much emphasis was placed on defense, which led to low scoring. There were far fewer fouls than today and one official could handle a game. The man fouled did not have to make the foul shot and one player usually did all the foul shooting for his team.

In those days height was not important, the emphasis being on speed, shooting ability and expert ball handling. The center needed height but the other players could be midgets provided they were fast and could dribble and shoot.

The OHS games were played in the bandbox school gym. A ball could be out of bounds but not a player, since spectators sat on the very edge of the court. The baskets were set on the end walls and a player who had practiced the art could run up the wall and drop the ball into the basket.

All of this made for a much different type of ball than is seen today. The enthusiasm was just as great then as now, however, and the games were just as exciting.

## CHRISTMAS, 1911

Christmas, 1911! What was the holiday season like in Oneonta 50 years ago? What dramas were being enacted and who were the actors? Let's take a journey back in memory and find out.

To begin with, it was a green Christmas. The weather had been mild all fall with practically no snow. Boats were still running on the Hudson and farmers were doing some plowing. The older folks didn't mind, what with no walks to shovel, but the kids disliked the idea of not being able to use their new Flexible Flyers on Christmas afternoon.

Of course the girls could give dolly a ride in the new carriage and the boys could while away the hours with their steam engines, the small motors that ran on a dry cell and that new contraption, the gyroscope.

The big new Hotel Oneonta was fast getting the reputation of being one of the best hosteleries in the state. Bowling alleys and a billiard parlor had just been installed in the basement. Western Union had taken quarters in the huge lobby and Norris Ogden had just assumed management of the basement barber shop.

A favorite topic of discussion was the troubles of Orra Tipple, editor of the *Schenectady Monitor* ("Monster" in popular speech). The portly Tipple had just stuck his foot into the hot water in which he was to wade for the remainder of his journalistic life.

Two Oneonta attorneys, Edson Hayward and W. L. Hilzinger, had just sued Tipple for \$10,000, claiming that there were libelous statements in a series of stories on "Lawyers and Hearse Chasers".

Many young people were home from college for Christmas, among them John Luce and Jack and Louis Capron, Yale; Ella Bull, Bryn Mawr; Ruth Butterfield, Vassar; Lynn Miller, Frank Huntington and George Borst, Wesleyan. These and many others of the younger set were at the reception and hop which Maude Smith gave in the ballroom of the City Club on the top floor of the Oneonta.

The automobile was beginning to make its presence known. Arthur Butts announced that he had sold 15 Cadillacs and would have 10 more for spring delivery. Dr. Arthur Cutler gave himself a Christmas present of a Locomobile, which he would soon have painted a fiery red so he wouldn't drive off in someone else's car after a house call. Dan Sherman had bought a 30 passenger Autocar with which he planned to make regular trips between Oneonta and his amusement center at Sherman Lake.

O. W. Hathaway had just purchased the Oneonta Theatre and was booking first class road shows. On Christmas day you could give your best girl a double treat, "Beyond Pardon" in the afternoon and at night Bertha M. Clay's tear jerking melodrama, "Thorns and Orange Blossoms". And a half dollar bought the best seat.

There were two movie theaters, The Casino where Dean Phipps' now is and The Happy Hour in the Brady Shoe Store location. This would soon move to Broad Street where the Enders store is now. If your father could spare a dime, you had it made.

Yes, it was good to be alive at Christmas time in 1911, especially if you were young.

## DAYS OF THE BOBSLED

The big bobsled with its dozen passengers had started at the crest of the hill at the top of Elm Street and by the time it reached Spruce was making 50 miles an hour.

And then the helmsman, his feet braced on the crossbar and the tiller ropes tight in his hands, saw the guard at Center Street standing in the middle of the road with his hands held high, a sign that the Normal trolley was approaching.

"Brake" was the order and a dozen pairs of heels dug into the snow. There was ice beneath the thin crust, however, and the speeding sled scarcely slowed. The pilot skillfully veered to the right and skidded into the drifts along the curb. "Dump 'er," he barked. Twelve bodies leaned far over and sled and passengers ploughed into the soft snow barrier.

Nobody had been hurt and after snow had been dug out of mouths and ears, the gang started up the hill for another try. This one would probably be successful for seldom did sled and trolley reach the same place at the same time.

In the days of our youth, bobsledding on Elm Street and Ford Avenue was a favorite winter pastime for the boys and girls of the village as well as for the Normal students. Although Ford Avenue was steeper, there were houses nearly to the top of Elm Street and the snow on the road was more firmly packed so that street got the bigger play.

The sleds were big affairs, holding from 12 to 18 people. Some, like Sherman Fairchild's "Peter Pan", were quite elaborate, with foot rests and padded seats, but most were simply a long plank mounted on front and rear sets of runners.

There were no footrests on this type. The person in front of you grasped your ankles in his hands and you did the same for the boy or girl behind you. Some bobs had a steering wheel but these were dangerous in case of a pileup and most helmsman steered with ropes. These passed through pulleys at the ends of the beam across the front of the sled and thence to the front runners.

Walnut Street could be reached on most nights. When conditions were perfect, with the road icy and the temperature around freezing, you could go to Main, down that street to South Main and thence to the D.&H. freight house, a distance of about a mile and a half from the top of the hill.

There were few traffic problems. Not many people drove cars in the winter in those days and sleighs kept clear of Elm and Ford on nights when the coasting was good. The trolley on Center Street was the only danger.

The sport looked dangerous but there were comparatively few accidents. Once in a while a sled would get out of control, jump the curb and slam into a tree. Then there might be a broken leg or arm. Once Sam Dibble's outfit piled up with the result that Harold Foote's leg was badly broken and several Normal girls were hurt. On another occasion, the Normal phys ed teacher, Miss Armbruster, was in a wreck and lived up to her nickname of "Armbuster".

The man at the head of the bob was the important guy. We can recall a few of the experts, among them Kendall Dunn, Stu Keenan, Bill Lunn, Bob Golden and Harold Smith.



## WHERE CLINTON CAMPED

"An encampment was made for one night, according to a diary kept by one of the officers, at VanDerwerker's Mill."—Campbell's History of Oneonta.

"The foot portion of the army bivouacked on the Ford farm south of the depot in Oneonta village."—Reminiscences of Harvey Baker.

For many years the story has persisted that General James Clinton's army camped overnight on the site of Neahwa Park on its way down the river during the Revolution to join forces with General John Sullivan. Despite the above statements, the well documented truth is that the Continentals did indeed pass through the park area but did not camp there.

The purpose of the Sullivan-Clinton Expedition of 1779 was to break the power of the Iroquois and to destroy their granaries, which not only supported the redskins but contributed greatly to the larders of the British troops.

The plan was for Sullivan to cross to the Susquehanna, ascend the river to Tioga Point and there meet Clinton, who was to proceed up the Mohawk to Canajoharie, cross over to Otsego Lake and then go down the river. The combined armies would strike westward, destroying the homes and gardens of the Indians.

Clinton's forces included the 6th Massachusetts and 4th New York regiments and the 4th Regiment of the Pennsylvania Line, together with a company of Morgan's scouts and a few New York militia. There were about 1,800 men in the command with 220 boats to carry the ammunition, food and equipment.

Upon arrival at Canajoharie the brigade went into camp and on June 17 started for Otsego Lake. By July 5 the entire contingent had reached the foot of the lake. The river outlet was too shallow to permit the boats to pass out, so a dam was built which raised the lake level about two feet. When this was opened the resulting freshet would carry the boats over the shoals.

On August 9 the force started down the river. Each batteau had a crew of three men while the remaining soldiers marched down either side of the stream. Four officers' diaries have been preserved and they indicate clearly where the encampments were.

The first night was spent on the Culley farm near the present Milford Center. On August 10 the troops reached a place which one diary (perhaps the only one available to Campbell and Baker) calls simply "Jochum's farm". Joachim Vanderwerker, who was commonly called "Jochum", owned the land where Neahwa Park is now, and it is to be assumed that the local historians thought that he was the man referred to.

The other diarists (and General Clinton himself) made it clear that the person referred to was "Jochum" VanValkenburg, whose farm near the present village of Colliers was later owned by Isaac Collier. A map by a soldier named Gray shows the place as being a short distance above the mouth of Schenevus Creek.

Camp was made for the third night at Ogden's farm below the mouth of Otego Creek and near the site of Albert Farone's Stone Farmhouse.

The Sullivan-Clinton Expedition not only accomplished its intended result but it opened to safe white colonization a vast area of New York state.

## *SCHOOL DAYS OF YORE*

Oneontans were mighty proud of their school system, especially the brand new high school, a half century ago, but the tax burden was getting just a bit heavy. Educational expenses in 1912 were \$47,012.20, including \$26,109.26 for salaries alone, and that was a lot of money.

It seems incredible that 1,184 pupils could be given a year's schooling for less than \$50,000 but life was far less complicated back in the "good years" and so was the school system. Let's see what was going on when we (and some of you) were going to high school.

Dr. George J. Dann was superintendent in 1912, presiding over an empire of three schools, the High School and the East End and River Street schools. Mitchell and Chestnut Street had not yet been built and Center Street was leased to the State, which operated it as a training school for the Normal students, the Bugbee School being 20 years in the future. There was no parochial school.

The Academy Street building, dedicated in 1908, housed the four year high school, the kindergarten and eight elementary grades. The latter occupied the first two floors and the high school the top two. With 305 pupils in the secondary and 510 in the elementary divisions, the building was filled to capacity.

Richard E. Morris, a gentleman and a scholar in every sense of those words, was the principal, doubling in Freshman Latin. Ella M. Briggs, as fine a person and teacher as ever faced a class, was vice-principal and head of the mathematics department. She was a no-nonsense teacher, feared but highly respected.

Harriet Stevens, in the twilight of a long and brilliant teaching career, was the beloved history instructor. Her discipline had vanished with the years and many stunts were pulled on her, of which we are certain that some of her students (including this one) are none too proud.

Kate Palmer handled French and German and Gladys Miller taught Biology and German. Pretty Ethel Quirin had the English courses. Emily Palmer also taught English and was the public speaking mentor. Bernice Bennett helped in math and Mary Turnbull was the Latin instructor. Perky Susie VanAuken presided over the commercial department.

Albert E. Fizzle, fresh out of NYU, was the science teacher and he could make physics and chemistry come alive. The gang had a lot of fun up there on the top floor but we also learned a lot. Fitz is down in our book as one of the best teachers we ever had.

But two sports were played, basketball and baseball, and Prof. Fizzle coached both. There was an orchestra but no band and hence no majorettes. This school paper, *The Echo*, was going strong but there was no annual. There was a play each year. That was about the extent of the extra-curricular activities.

The curriculum offered four courses: Normal, College Entrance, Technical and Commercial. The passing mark was 75%, somewhat higher than today.

The educational fare of those days might be considered meagre today but it was satisfying and stuck to your intellectual ribs. Good read (pardon the pun) subject matter was the principal item, with few side dishes and little dessert.

## METHODIST CHURCHES

Those early Methodists in Oneonta built well. Upon the spiritual foundation which they laid in 1830 has risen a church organization of size, strength and zeal. Even the first physical church which they erected in 1849 is still standing, 113 years later.

Probably few people realize that the dwelling at 8 Hill Place is the original Methodist church building, moved twice during the past century but showing few outward signs of its antiquity.

Methodism began in Oneonta in 1830 when 15 men and women, led by the Rev. George Haynor, organized a Methodist Class. Among them were Elias Brewer, D. T. Evans and D. T. Clark. Preachers from the Otsego circuit served the organization.

The group remained a "class" until 1836 when the Emory Chapel of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Oneonta was incorporated. Among the charter members were Alvin Torrey, Calvin Maples, Jacob VanWoert, Samuel Richards, Abraham Ward, Ira Shepard, Jacob P. VanWoert, Jehiel Lamb and Philip Lobdell. Early meetings were held in homes and in the village school on Grove Street.

In 1848 Oneonta, with Laurens, was made a pastoral charge. The next year a church building was erected on a plot of land purchased from Robert Hopkins for \$80. The lot covered the site of the present church and extended back along Church Street to about opposite High. The wooden church, which cost \$1,500, was erected on the hill at the back end of the lot, facing Main Street.

In 1851 the society was reincorporated under the name of the Methodist Episcopal Church Society of Oneonta Village. There was soon need for a larger building and a new church was erected in 1869 at a cost of \$8,000 on the site of the present edifice.

The old church was sold in 1870 to A. W. Thompson who converted it into living quarters. Some years later it was moved to a site near the present Hill Place and when that street was opened was placed in its present position.

The society continued to grow and in 1886 the church was greatly enlarged. The building was raised to provide a basement for the use of the Sunday School and large wings were built on either side. The whole structure was veneered with brick. This church, so familiar to generations of Oneontans, was used until 1925.

The will of George I. Wilber, a devoted member of the congregation who died in 1922, provided for a bequest of \$100,000 to build a new church. The old building was razed in 1925 and work on the new edifice was started. During its construction Sunday services were held in the Palace Theatre and the midweek devotions were conducted in the First Baptist Church.

The church, which was dedicated on September 12, 1926, by Bishop Joseph F. Berry, cost approximately \$350,000. Pledges of \$125,000 were added to Mr. Wilber's gift and the balance was financed by a mortgage. This was liquidated in 1946.

The present pastor, Rev. Clayton W. Hoag, presides over one of the largest and most active congregations in the city.



## COLONEL WALTER SCOTT

Colonel Walter Scott nearly ruined the political debut of George W. Fairchild back in 1906. Running for Congress as an independent with Democratic endorsement, against the wealthy industrialist, who had regular Republican support, Scott carried Oneonta by over 400 votes and Otsego County by 1,800. Only substantial Republican majorities in Delaware, Schoharie and Ulster counties enabled the future founder of IBM to win by a narrow margin.

But it was not politics that gave stature and fame to Walter Scott. As a teacher, merchant, banker and soldier, the colonel earned his place as a prominent citizen of Oneonta by a variety of talents and accomplishments.

Walter Scott was born on a farm in Allegany County in 1846. After getting his education in Friendship Academy and Pike Seminary, he taught for four years, three of them in Missouri. Returning east in 1870 he came to Oneonta two years later and started a successful grocery and crockery business.

In 1888 Scott was instrumental in forming the Oneonta Building and Loan Association which he served as president for half a century. This type of lending institution was virtually unknown at the time and he labored for years with voice and pen to get the idea across to the public. A series of short, pithy advertisements ran day after day, month after month, year after year in *The Star* and helped build the institution to a position of size and strength.

His military career began in 1880 when he enlisted in the local Third Separate Company, New York National Guard. He was commissioned a second lieutenant the following year. In 1882 he competed in a national rifle competition and was chosen a member of a team of 12 men which represented the National Guard of the United States in a match at Wimbledon, England, with the English Volunteers. The home team won, with Scott finishing third among the U.S. sharpshooters.

Early in 1886 he was made a first lieutenant and promotion to a captaincy in command of the company followed later that year. He continued as skipper until the outbreak of the Spanish-American war in 1898 when he was made a major in command of a battalion of the First New York Volunteer Infantry, of which the local company was a part.

He served in Hawaii with the regiment and was a lieutenant colonel at war's end in 1899. When the local unit of the United Spanish War Veterans was formed, it was named the Colonel Walter Scott Post in honor of the former G Company commander.

Colonel Scott sold his grocery business in the late '80s and entered the insurance and real estate fields, in which he was engaged for the remainder of his business life.

He was an independent Republican who had never run for office until 1906 when he was drafted by the Independence League to run for Congress from the 34th District. He was endorsed by the Democrats and was recommended by GAR and USWV posts throughout the four counties, a practice not now followed by veteran organizations. The Republicans named him as their mayoralty candidate in 1911 but he declined the nomination.

Colonel Walter Scott died in 1938 and was buried in Riverside Cemetery.

## FAIRCHILD MANSION

No, Virginia, the big brick Masonic Temple at the corner of Main and Grand Streets was not built during the Gay Nineties as you might suppose. It was remodelled to be sure during that period of flamboyant architecture, but the main portion of the huge mansion is 95 years old.

The house was once the scene of much social activity. Brilliant functions were held in the ballroom on the third floor and famous people slept in its bedrooms, for this was once the home of George W. Fairchild, the wealthy congressman and industrialist who organized IBM.

The original portion of the house was built in 1867 by David J. Yager, a prominent citizen of the period and the father of Willard E. Yager and Miss Marion Yager.

As first constructed it was almost square and had a flat roof. It replaced a frame dwelling which the Yagers had occupied since 1849. This was moved back upon the newly opened Grand Street and is still standing, the second house in from the corner of Main. It was long the home of Dr. Ezra MacDougall.

Soon after his marriage in 1891 Fairchild purchased the property, which has a 200 foot frontage on Main Street and the same depth on Grand, and in 1897 enlarged and remodelled the house. At this time the tower was built on the easterly front corner, a third floor was added and the tile roof put on.

The roof is of imported Belgian tile. It is extremely heavy and is supported by massive timbering, including stress members to compensate for the wind load on its large surface. In 1915 still more alterations were made.

After the deaths of Mr. and Mrs. Fairchild in the early '20s, the house was unoccupied except for a caretaker, until 1929 when it was purchased by the Oneonta Masonic lodge. Sherman M. Fairchild, the son and heir, gave the lodge the library, the expensive draperies and floor coverings, most of the furniture and many art objects which had adorned the various rooms.

Very few alterations were needed to convert the mansion into a beautiful clubhouse. Little had to be done on the first floor. Some partitions were removed on the second floor to provide a dining room and kitchen. On the top floor there was a ballroom flanked by servants' quarters. Part of this space was converted into a lodge room. In 1949 the lodge and dining rooms were enlarged and other improvements made.

There were six fireplaces and six baths, most of them still in use. One interesting feature of the mansion is the use made of various woods. The library is finished in mahogany while sycamore was used in another room. The dining room (now used for buffet suppers) is panelled and beamed with mahogany while genuine French tapestry covers the walls. The card room is finished in silver maple. Black walnut, quartered oak and cherry are other woods used.

The property is owned by Oneonta Lodge, Free and Accepted Masons. Other Masonic bodies using it are the Chapter of Royal Arch Masons, the Council of Royal and Select Masters, the Lodge of Perfection, the Order of the Eastern Star and the Order of Amaranth.

There are few nights when there is not something going on in the big house with the long and colorful history.

## BLIZZARD OF '88

Tuesday, March 13, 1888, was a bleak and dismal day for Oneonta merchants. It had been snowing steadily since Sunday night and four feet of the stuff made Main Street impassable. There were only narrow paths along the sidewalks.

Not a wheel was turning on the railroad and all of the stages were snowbound. No mail had been received for two days.

It was the time of the Blizzard of 1888, probably the most famous snow storm that ever hit the eastern United States. Much less snow fell than during the great storm of 1857 but it was much lighter and the wind piled it into huge drifts.

For three days traffic on the D.&H. was at a virtual standstill. Trains drawn by as many as four and five locomotives were unable to buck the drifts and many a crew was marooned in a white wilderness.

Drifts eight and ten feet high and 100 feet long blocked the roads and made the lot of the stage driver a most unhappy one. Many sheep and cattle perished in the fields.

On Wednesday the snowfall lessened and Allen Scramling came up from his River Street farm and ploughed Main Street with his team of oxen, going up one side and down the other. The snow was pushed up along the curbs and was augmented by that from the sidewalks, making a wall of white higher than the heads of pedestrians.

The snow melted rapidly with resultant floods in some sections. The blizzard caused comparatively little damage in Oneonta but it was an experience that people talked about for the rest of their lives.

The Oneonta which went through the storm of 1888 was a far different place from that of today. The general boundaries of the village, which then had a population of from 4,500 to 5,000, were Otsego, Center, West and River Streets with few residents having their homes outside that area.

Three dairies were located at that time in what are now residential portions of the city. There was the Morrell dairy at the corner of Dietz and Walnut Streets (Walnut was not extended to Church until 1895), the Walling dairy where the United Presbyterian church now is, and the W. Camden dairy on West Street.

Main Street had seven residences between Ford Avenue and Chestnut Street. On the site of Bresee's were the Bissell and Bundy homes, standing back from the street with large, tree-studded lawns in front. This area was called "Shady Side" and was the scene of ice cream socials and lawn festivals.

Where the Palace Theatre now is was the brick residence of D. F. Wilber and just west, where the Wilber Bank stands, was the famous Stone Mansion of E. R. Ford. The frame house and office building of Dr. Samuel H. Case occupied the space where the Triangle and Endicott Johnson shoe stores now are.

Where the Sears Roebuck store stands was the brick residence of Dr. Hosea Hamilton while the Sears Farm store is on the site formerly occupied by the home of "Dr." D. T. Evans, tailor and veterinarian.



## SECOND BAPTIST CHURCH

It has been called the Main Street Church only since 1919 but there has been a Baptist edifice on the corner of Maple Street for over a century.

It all began when 16 members of the Oneonta Plains Freewill Baptist Church were granted a dismissal with the privilege of forming a new organization. They lived in the east end of the town and the Plains Church was far away.

Accordingly they met at the Emmons school on February 25, 1856, and organized the Second Freewill Baptist Church of Oneonta. Those pioneers were David and Sally Miller, Ansel and Phoebe Marvin, Jasper and Maria Burgin, Jacob and Phoebe Quackenbush, Frederick and Nancy Bornt, David Marvin, Mrs. Rachel Miller, Mrs. Eliza Burgin, Mrs. Deborah Gifford and Mrs. Mary Blend.

The first year was a busy one for the tiny congregation. In April the Rev. Orange T. Moulton was called to be the first pastor. In November the society was incorporated with the following trustees: David Marvin, Hervey N. Rowe, David M. Miller, Frederick Bornt, Jr., Jasper Burgin, Jacob Quackenbush, Louis L. Bundy, Ansel Marvin and Samuel J. Cooke.

There was, of course, need for a church building. At first a lot on the south side of Main Street near what is now Grand was considered but on October 1, 1856, the site of the present church was decided upon.

There had been a building there since 1805 when Joseph Westcott made a clearing at the corner of the Indian trail which is now Main Street and the narrow road then known as Bronson's Lane, and built a log store, which he operated for some years. In 1822 E. R. Ford came to town, built a frame store on the location and ran it for about a year and a half when he moved to the corner of Main and Chestnut.

The Baptists bought the property from Mr. Ford for \$850 and moved the store (at a cost of \$14) to the site on Maple Street now occupied by the home of Ferris Mackey. It remained there for many years.

The meeting house, which was erected at a cost of \$3,300, was a simple but substantial frame structure, painted white with green blinds. The parsonage was built in 1871.

The congregation steadily increased in size and by 1889 it was evident that a larger church would have to be built. A committee consisting of Rev. A. E. Wilson, who was then pastor, Dr. E. J. Morgan and Wellington Hodge was appointed to consider plans.

In August of 1889 the cornerstone of the present brick church was laid. The building was dedicated on June 11, 1890. The total cost, including the carpets and seats, was about \$12,000, practically all of which had been raised by the time the building was completed. In 1927 an addition was built to provide more room for the Sunday School.

The pastor who will be best remembered by older Oneontans was Dr. Charles S. Pendleton, who served the church faithfully and well for 30 years (1896-1926). The present minister is Dr. George Thomson. The congregation is large and active and is playing its full part in the religious life of Oneonta.

## SOME OLD HOUSES

Old houses hold a deep fascination for many people. Who built them and when? What events of joy and sorrow have taken place within those mute walls? Let's wander around town and take a look at some dwellings which catch the eye because of their age, size or distinctive architecture.

We'll start at the corner of Maple and Walnut. In 1870 Albert Morris, prominent business man and the first mayor of Oneonta, erected an "elegant residence" on Walnut Street near the corner of Maple. Here he raised three boys, all of them later to be associated with him in the feed business.

In 1885 Mr. Morris bought the next door corner property known as the "Elder Cobb place" (the house was built by G. T. Yager in 1866). He moved the house and built on the site the large brick mansion in which he lived until his death in 1923. The house was later owned by Daniel Franklin, also a mayor, and by Justice Joseph P. Molinari. It is now owned and occupied by Harold Brady.

Son Burton H. continued to live in the family homestead. In about 1909 he moved the house to Highland Avenue (where it still stands) and erected the large house with white columns in which he and then his widow lived until their deaths. It is now occupied by a SUCO sorority.

The oldest son, A. Stanley Morris, built in 1902 the house at 10 Maple Street which is now the home and office of Dr. G. Traver Sanly. Clifford, the third son, lived on the south corner of Maple and Walnut in the house where his widow still resides. It was built by W. A. E. Tompkins in 1883 and at one time was the home of Mrs. Elizabeth Porter, a sister of Collis P. Huntington.

The brick house on Maple Street facing Maple, which is now the home of Lynn H. Bresee, was for years the residence of his father, Frank H. Bresee. It was built by Munro Westcott in 1887.

The big brick house at the corner of Walnut Street and Ford Avenue which is now owned by the First Methodist church, was built in 1882 by Frank Gould, a partner (and brother-in-law) of A. C. Moody in a unique junk business. The house was later occupied by Dr. A. D. Getman and then for years was the residence of Supreme Court Justice A. L. Kellogg.

There is an interesting quartet of houses at the corner of Walnut and Dietz. The white columned residence of Nathan Pendleton was built about 1910 by Marcus C. Hemstreet, a prominent banker and politician. It replaced a frame house facing Dietz Street and built in 1869 by D. T. Huson. This was occupied for years by M. L. S. Jackson, the father of F.M.H.

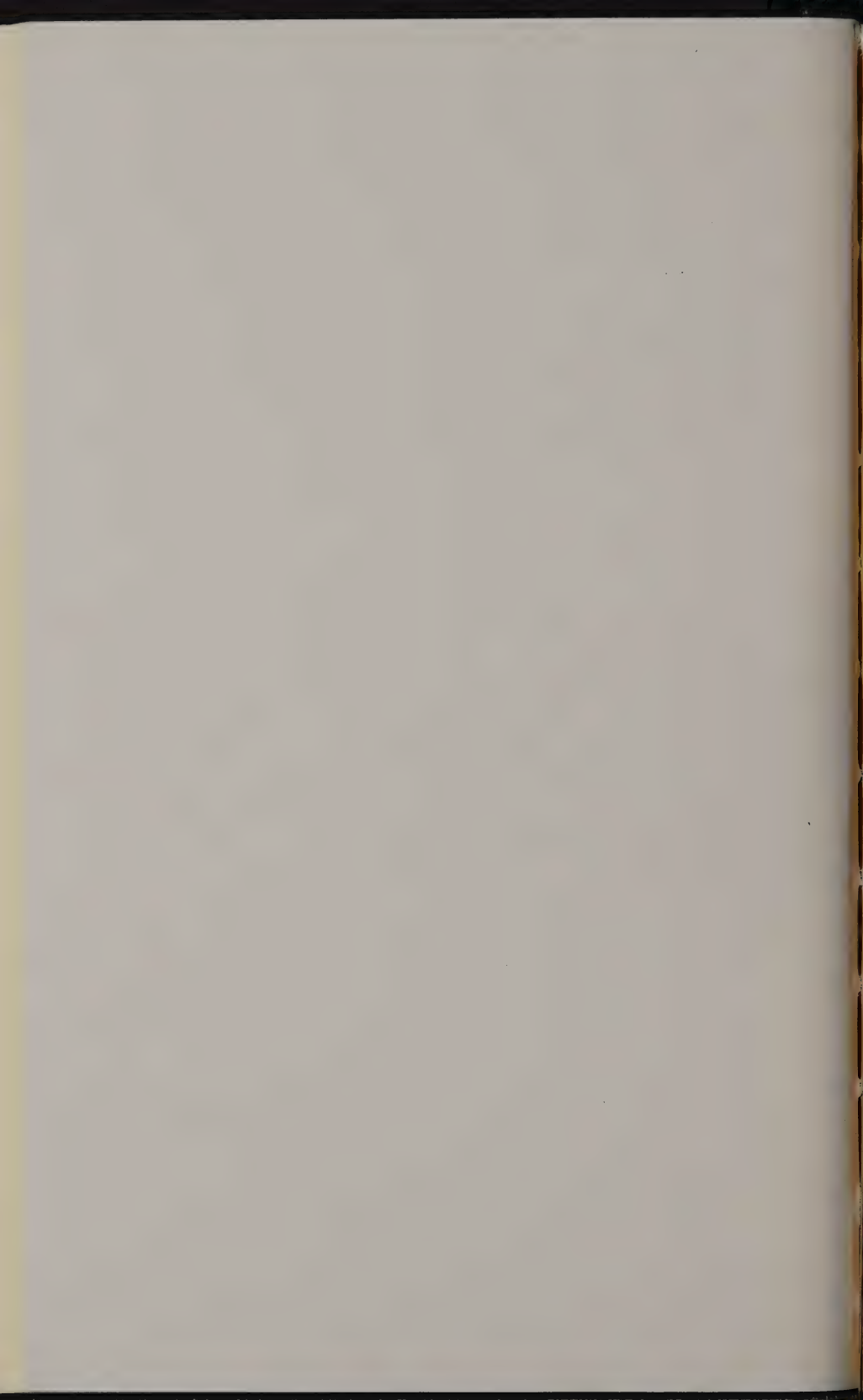
The large brick house across Dietz Street now owned by Dr. Fisk Brooks was built in 1895 by our father, George E. Moore, a pharmacist, and we spent our boyhood there. Its site was the barnyard of the old David Morrell farm.

The brick house on the opposite corner, now a photographic studio, was built, also in 1895, by L. C. Gurney, partner in the dry goods firm of M. Gurney & Sons. The fourth corner house, now owned by Dr. Darrell Colombo, was also built in 1895 and was the home of Dr. P. I. Bugbee, principal of the State Normal School.









# In Old Oneonta



Published by Oneonta Department Store

Ruins of Oneonta's \$75,000 Fire, May 22, 1906.





# IN OLD ONEONTA

BY

Edwin R. Moore

VOLUME TWO

PUBLISHED BY

Upper Susquehanna Historical Society

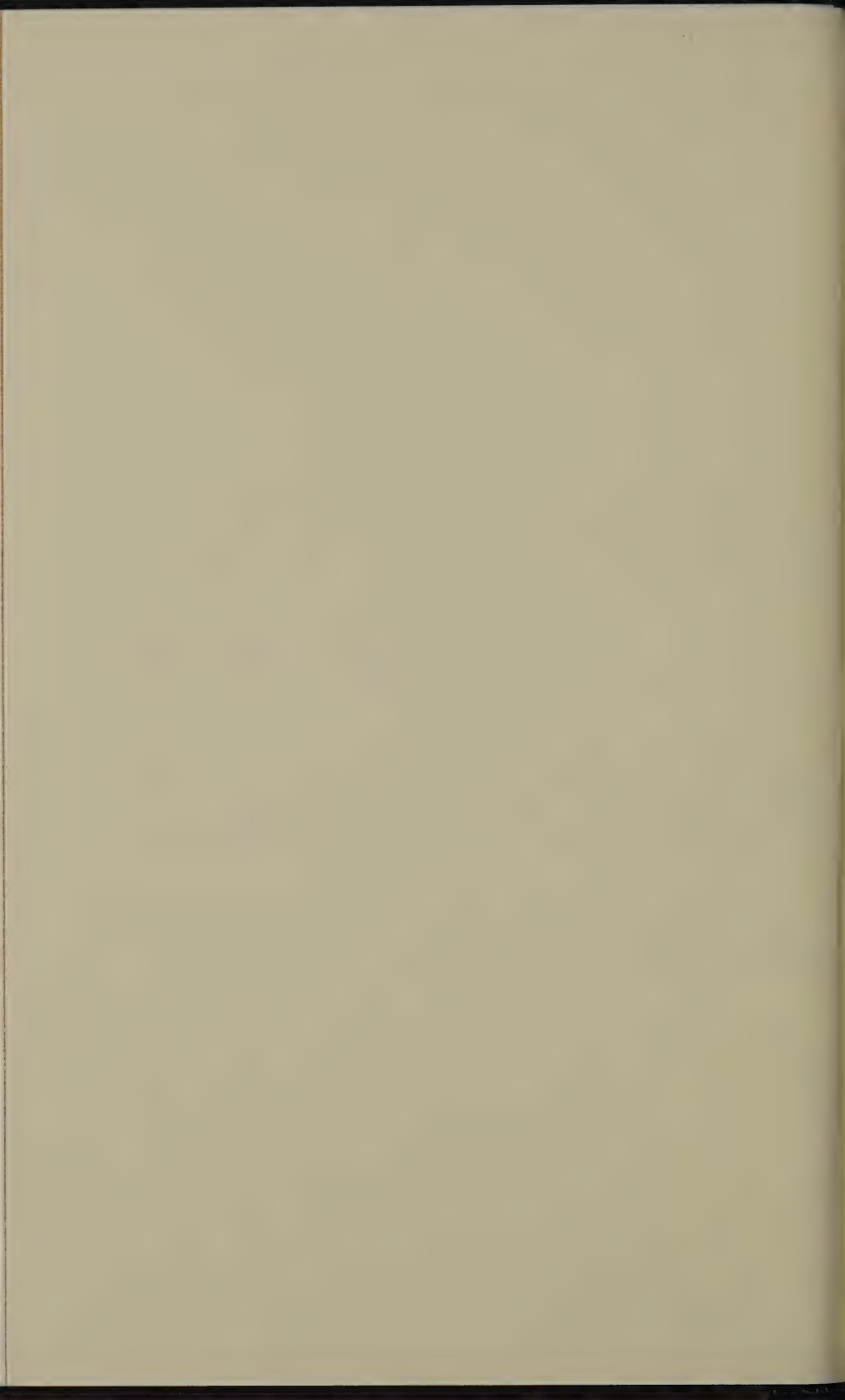
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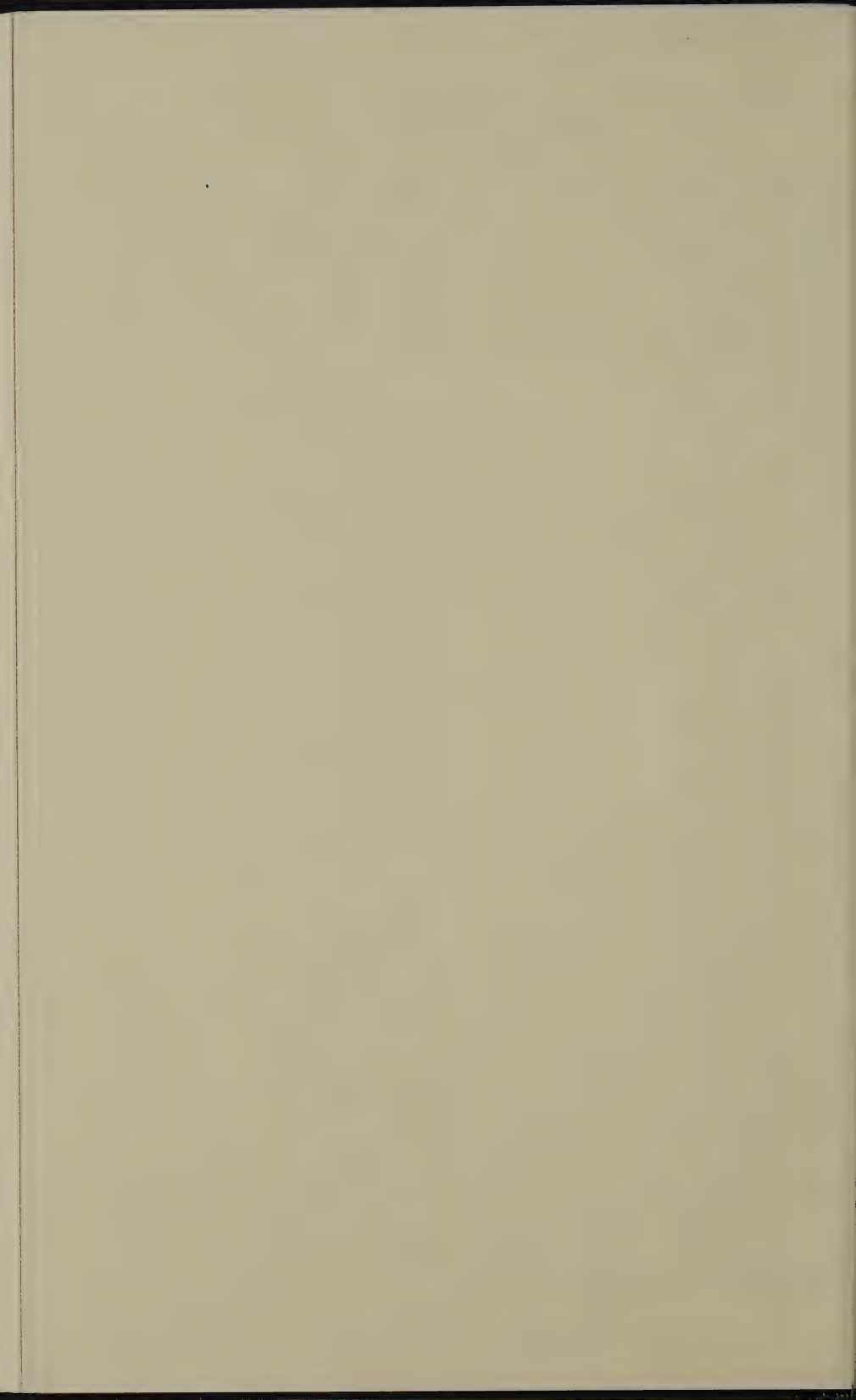
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## ANY RAGS TODAY?

The farmer's wife was glad to see the big wagon break over the hill beyond the barn. It had been weeks since the tin peddler had paid his last visit and her rag bag was full. Furthermore, she badly needed a dipper and some cups.

In due time the wagon pulled up beside the horse block, the rags were weighed and their condition appraised and the exchange for the tinware made.

Such scenes were enacted frequently fifty years and more ago. Rags were in great demand for paper making in the days before the wood pulp method was perfected and most of them were acquired by barter for needed kitchen utensils.

One of the largest suppliers in this part of the country was the firm of Moody & Gould, which had its headquarters in Oneonta and branches at Binghamton and Scranton, Pa.

The business started in 1866 when A. C. Moody came to Oneonta from Prince Edward Island and started a hardware store and general barter business. Soon he had four wagons on the road, traveling from farm to farm and exchanging tinware and small hardware items for rags and hides.

In 1869 E. M. Vosburgh became a partner. The firm continued to prosper and soon ten wagons were ranging the countryside. In 1873 the firm erected a wooden building on Main Street in what was to be known as the Wooden Row.

Vosburgh retired in 1877 and his place was taken by Frank Gould, a native of Fort Ann and Mr. Moody's brother-in-law. In 1880 the firm purchased the old foundry property at the corner of Prospect and South Main Streets, now occupied by the Northrup Supply Company. This was used as a rag storehouse.

In 1890 the company moved from Main Street to the Prospect Street location. Here the business was conducted for about three decades. At the height of its success Moody & Gould had about twenty wagons on the road, traveling as far west as Rochester. The rigs, built something like a stagecoach, had plenty of storage space for the rags which were collected and for barter media.

From thirty to forty men and women were employed at the plant, sorting the rags as to material, color and condition, and manufacturing the tin cups, dippers and other small kitchen and household items. The wagons also carried brooms, which were made in the Schoharie Valley.

Both the partners were prominent and well to do citizens. Frank Gould died in 1899 but during his brief life was associated with many enterprises. He was a director of the water company, of the outfits supplying gas and electricity, of the Oneonta Table Company and of the Oneonta Fertilizer Company. He was an organizer of the Eckerson Press Company and was president of the Oneonta & Otego Valley Railroad, which ran the street railways. He was a trustee and then president of Oneonta village. Frank Gould built and occupied the brick house at the corner of Walnut Street and Ford Avenue now owned by the First Methodist Church.

The older partner, A. C. Moody, who died in 1915 at the age of 80, was also a village trustee and president and was active in many civic organizations and enterprises. He resided in the house at 23 Elm Street now occupied by a Hartwick College sorority.



## ICEMAN COMETH NOT

The iceman cometh no more in Oneonta nor are his visits missed in this day of an ice machine in every bar and two refrigerators in every home.

Time was, however, when the harvesting, storage and distribution of natural ice was a tidy industry with scores of men employed in the cutting season and a sizeable number the year around.

In the early days refrigeration was not a problem. Most food was consumed close to its point of origin. Furthermore, about every home got its water from a well or a spring and perishable foods could be lowered into the cool depths of the well or placed in a bucket in the spring.

It is not known just when the commercial sale of ice in the village began but by 1888 Luzerne Westcott and Eugene Rose were in business as the Oneonta Ice Company.

In the early '90s Joseph S. Lunn entered into partnership with his father-in-law, Mr. Westcott. Mr. Lunn soon acquired the Westcott interest and for some years was the principal owner, being succeeded at his death in 1917 by his son, William H. Lunn.

An early competitor, the Crystal Ice Company, which got its product from the Susquehanna River above the Emmons bridge, was absorbed in 1899. The Oneonta Ice Company was incorporated in 1903.

In its early days the company got its ice from the Electric Light Pond, the river, the "horseshoe" just above the city line at East End and the body of water behind the old Pond Lily Hotel on Oneida Street.

About 1918 cutting rights and land on Goodyear Lake were acquired and thereafter most of the ice was secured from this source. The large icehouse stood back of what is now the summer camp of William Lunn.

In an average year about 7,000 tons of ice were harvested, usually in several cuttings. About 75 men worked during these periods. The field was laid out about 200 feet along the shore and as far out on the ice as was necessary. It was then cross marked so that blocks 22 by 32 inches would result. Twelve inches was the ideal thickness.

The "header" strip was sawed by hand and the ice removed so that there was a clear channel of water at the side of the field. Strips were then cut, at first by a horse drawn "plough" and later by motorized equipment. The strips were floated to the open channel, "spudded" into the proper size and drawn up on shore and into the icehouse by conveyors.

Until 1917, when motor trucks were introduced, the ice was delivered by horse and wagon. Six one-horse outfits served the family routes and the business section was taken care of by larger two-horse wagons. The horses were stabled on Railroad Avenue and their hay and grain came from a farm on Cemetery Road owned by Mr. Lunn.

In 1937 the Oneonta Ice Company, which by that time was also handling coal, fuel oil and gasoline, sold the ice business to the Stewart Ice Company, which had built an artificial ice plant about a year before, and became the Oneonta Oil and Fuel Company.

## SOME OLD HOUSES

Unfortunately many of Oneonta's fine old houses stood athwart the path of progress and have given way to structures more necessary to the economy of the city. The Ford Stone Mansion, the McDonald Tavern, the big brick Walling residence — only memories of these once famous buildings remain.

So it is with the handsome residence which stood for so many years on the ground now covered by Bresee's. This frame structure was built in 1812 by Jacob Dietz, a pioneer merchant. Following his death in 1831 it was acquired by Mrs. L. L. Bundy and was her home for years. Later here was born Archibald Wright, the father of Willard Huntington Wright who, under the pseudonym of S. S. VanDine, wrote the famous Philo Vance mystery stories.

Standing well back from the street, it was fronted by a wide tree studded lawn. The house was moved off the lot when the brick block was built in 1895.

Many interesting houses still remain, some of which we have already discussed. We will now visit some more buildings which are unusual for some reason or another.

One of the oldest structures on Main Street is the front portion of what is now the Eagles Club on Main below Grove Street. This was originally the one and a half story residence of Timothy Sabin, a prominent Oneonta merchant, and was built by him in 1841.

Sabin owned considerable land directly back of the house, including the site of the present Senior High School. The land was purchased of him when the Union Free School was erected there in 1867.

In 1882 Walter L. Brown, state senator, hardware merchant and one of the guiding spirits of the Oneonta Fair, bought the house and added another story. He lived there until he built the brick house next door now owned by the VFW. The house was purchased in 1914 by the Oneonta Lodge of Elks and extensively remodeled for its use. The Elks occupied it until the present building on Chestnut Street was finished in 1952. It has been owned by the Eagles since then.

The white house back of the Broad Street Diner just below the corner of Main was once one of the show places of the village. It was built in 1867 by William McCrum, a prosperous cabinet maker and undertaker. Following his death it was occupied for some years by his son, Wirt McCrum.

Extensive gardens once stretched back of the house and to the south as far as the present YMCA.

The joined wooden houses just east of the Episcopal Church were built in 1870 by H. J. Brewer, H. N. Rowe, D. J. Yager, N. I. Ford, H. J. Collins and T. P. Emmons. The dwellings have been occupied over the past 93 years by scores of families. A continuous porch over 100 feet long once ran across the front.

Several people have asked about the big white house at 443 Main Street now owned and occupied by Mrs. Bruce Bouton. This imposing structure was built about 1840 by Nicholas Alger. It was later occupied as a farm house by Asel Marvin and then by "Uncle Johnny" Miller, the great-grandfather of the late W. M. (Wink) Miller. It was owned for years by Matthew Wellman.

## THOSE OTSEGO BASS

1895 news item: "Not less than a ton of Otsego bass was sold in Oneonta during the first four days of May."

That little item set us to thinking and then to digging for facts, for a ton is a powerful lot of fish to come from a body of water which is not exactly the Atlantic Ocean.

We found that although the succulent Otsego bass is still taken from the lake, the species does not seem to exist in the same quantities as in olden times. In the days when a gill net was used, 5,000 of the famous fish have been taken with one draft of the sein and during the spring of 1851, 25,000 bass were taken from the lake.

The Otsego bass is said not to exceed six pounds in weight, with the average somewhat smaller. What primarily makes it different from any other type of bass is its delicious and distinctive taste when properly cooked. Connoisseurs of sea food will tell you that there is nothing quite like it.

Whether or not the Otsego bass is a distinct species of fish is a question which has aroused controversy for over a century. In the "Pioneers", published in 1823, James Fenimore Cooper put these words into the mouth of one of the characters:

"These fish are of a quality and flavor that in other countries would make them esteemed a luxury on the tables of princes. The world has no better fish than the bass of Otsego; it unites the richness of the shad with the firmness of the salmon."

Years later, Elihu Phinney, a famous Otsego Lake fisherman, described this bass as "beyond all peradventure the very finest fresh water fish that swims."

Louis Agassiz, the greatest naturalist of his day, declared that the Otsego bass is "in its organic structure a distinct fish, not found in any other waters of the world."

However, later experts are not quite so certain. In 1915 Dr. Tarleton H. Bean, the New York State fish culturist, said that the so-called Otsego bass "is merely the common Labrador whitefish which has become dwarfed in size by some peculiarity of its habitat." Other authorities have endorsed this opinion and a quite recent book on fishes does not even mention the species.

There are many, however, who are not overwhelmed by all this learning, and who will contend to the bitter end that the Otsego bass is a distinct fish and that anyone who has ever tasted it will never again be deceived by whitefish.

Over the years Otsego Lake has been stocked many times with whitefish from the Great Lakes. Some authorities contend that the true Otsego bass has disappeared, giving way to a hybrid fish which is really a cross between the original variety and the whitefish which have been put into the lake.

One fact emerges from all the welter of controversy. Whether true species or hybrid, the Otsego bass tastes surpassingly good.



## COAST TO COAST

"George I. Wilber? This is Mayor Joseph Lunn. Hope you are having a good time. If you run short of money, let me know and I'll see if I can get some endorsers on your note."

The time was the evening of November 2, 1915, and the occasion was a banquet of the Chamber of Commerce held in recognition of the opening of transcontinental telephone service between Oneonta and the West Coast.

Before each of the 400 guests in the big dining room of the Hotel Oneonta was a telephone and for over an hour the assemblage was privileged to listen to an exchange of greetings and badinage between those in the banquet hall and a group of Oneontans and former residents gathered in the Liberal Arts building at the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco, 3,400 miles away.

The list of honored guests at the banquet was impressive. Francis M. Hugo, New York Secretary of State, and Eugene Travis, State Comptroller, were there as were the general manager of the D.&H., Clifford S. Sims, and telephone officials from miles around.

Edwin W. Elmore, president of the Chamber, was toastmaster. Music was furnished by Gardner's orchestra and the Elks Quartet, composed of Harold F. Albert, John J. Gessner, Arthur N. Coy and Arthur Wheeler, sang. Mr. Albert led group singing of such favorites as "Tipperary," "My Bonnie," "Mary Ate Some Oysters," "Dixie," and "I Love You, California."

Howard W. Fluhrer, general manager of the Otsego & Delaware Telephone Co., had spent much time arranging the affair. Transcontinental service had been started in January of 1915, but it was some months before the loop to Oneonta was in operation and scarcely anyone in the room had heard a demonstration of this triumph of science.

Promptly at nine Mr. Fluhrer picked up his phone and asked Central to get him Lansingburg. From there the call was relayed to Buffalo, Chicago, Denver and Salt Lake City. At each office the operator gave the time and the weather. Finally the San Francisco operator came on with the announcement that it was 6:05 p.m. and the weather was fine.

In the Liberal Arts Building on the Exposition grounds were George I. Wilber, L. C. Millard and Frank D. Miller, Oneontans who were visiting the Fair, E. Burke Halliday, who married a sister of Henry Huntington and had spent many summers in Oneonta; Dr. Harry G. Richardson, son of a former Methodist minister here, and many others who had some connection with Oneonta.

For an hour and a half the conversations continued. Among the Oneonta participants were Mr. Elmore and Mayor Lunn, Dr. M. L. Ford, I. H. Rowe, E. D. Lewis, Walter L. Brown, Jesse A. Millard, Samuel H. Potter, Charles Smith and David Diefendorf, all prominent Oneontans of the period.

Victrola music was heard from California and the sound of the Pacific surf boomed through the receivers as movies of the Golden Gate were shown in the Oneonta dining room.

Coast to coast calls are now a commonplace matter but in 1915 it was pretty awe inspiring to hear people talking thousands of miles away.

## INDUSTRIOUS OTSEGO

To one not familiar with the history of Otsego County it must be difficult to believe that the area was once a beehive of industry, with scores of factories turning out products ranging from paper to pianos, from cloth to lead pipe, from furniture to threshing machines.

And yet from about 1835 to the end of the Civil War just about every village in the county had one or more concerns making goods not only for local consumption but in many cases for export to other parts of the country. With the coming of steam power and the railroads most of these industries vanished, although some persisted until well after the end of the century.

In the early days industry centered in the home and in small shops. Both linen and woolen cloth was made in the family circle while fine furniture and small farm implements were fashioned by one or two man outfits. Factories were gradually built until by 1835 the local industrial age was in full swing.

That year saw the population of Otsego reach 51,428, a figure that would not be reached again for 125 years. At the present time Oneonta has about 25 per cent of the county's population; in 1835 it was but a small hamlet. It can thus be seen that in that distant time there were many more people on farms and in small communities than there are today.

In 1835 there were 70 grist mills in the county and nearly 500 sawmills. Flax was widely grown and four linseed oil mills supplied a useful by-product. There were one or more carding and fulling mills in each township to prepare home woven cloth for use.

Ten cotton mills turned out annually a half million yards of various kinds of cloth from calico prints to fine broadcloth. Two woolen mills processed the fleece of over 400,000 Otsego County sheep.

There was a paper mill which converted rags into writing, printing and wrapping paper. Six iron works made a wide variety of machines, including plows, threshers and devices used in the cotton and oil mills. There was a brass foundry that had furnished harness trappings for the United States cavalry in the War of 1812.

There were fifteen distilleries running full blast but only one brewery, although the growing of hops was fast becoming a very important type of agriculture in the county. By 1860 nearly ninety per cent of the total hop crop in the United States was grown in New York and over one-third of the state's production came from Otsego County.

Two factories made pianos and church and parlor organs. There was a comb factory where hair ornaments were made of oxhorn, and the first shoe last plant in New York state. A hat factory made toppers of wool and sheepskin.

Scores of tanneries and asheries dotted the countryside. Dozens of small concerns made wagons, sleighs and harness while countless blacksmith shops turned out small implements of every kind.

The history of some of these concerns whose products carried the name and fame of Otsego far and wide is fascinating.

## JOHN COPE THE GOOD

When John Cope died in 1909 at the age of 88 in his fine home on Elm Street where the telephone company building now stands, there was considerable speculation as to where his fortune would go. His wife had died a few weeks before and there were no children.

Perhaps this successful merchant, banker and politician had left his money to his beloved St. James Episcopal Church, of which he had been senior warden for 38 years.

The truth of the matter was that John Cope died in near poverty because of an act which illustrates the nature of the man. Some years before, E. M. Carver, the cashier of the First National Bank, of which Cope was president, had absconded with a good share of the liquid assets of the institution.

In order not to disturb the confidence of the bank's depositors, Cope hushed the matter and made good the deficit out of his own funds, thus wiping out his considerable savings. It was years before the incident became generally known and even then few suspected the sacrifice Cope had made.

John Cope was born in New Lisbon in 1821. He attended school in Morris and after working for some years in the office of the cotton mill in that village, came to Oneonta in 1852 to clerk in the general store of E. R. Ford & Son in the stone building on Main Street at what is now the west corner of Broad Street.

Two years later he purchased the interest of Dewitt Ford, the eldest son of E. R., and the firm became Ford & Cope. In 1862 he withdrew from the firm and, with his brother James, started a rival emporium. He continued his interest, however, in the private banking business which he and the elder Ford had conducted. In 1871 this was consolidated into the First National Bank, which had just been chartered and of which John Cope was the first president.

He early became interested in civic affairs as a member of the newly formed Republican party. He was a member of the Board of Education of the first Union School District and for ten years served the township as supervisor, being chairman of that body for two terms.

In 1872 he was elected to the Assembly as one of the two members which Otsego County then had, serving for two terms. In 1877 President U. S. Grant named him postmaster and he held that position for four years, his office at the time being in a building which stood where Chestnut Street extension now meets Main.

On April 4, 1871, St. James Parish of the Episcopal Church was legally created and John Cope, who had been active in the church in its mission days, was elected senior warden, a position which he held until his death. In the same year the Rev. Robert Washbon, his brother-in-law, became rector and the church was built on land purchased for \$500 from Mr. and Mrs. Cope. It was strongly suspected that the money came from Mr. Cope's purse.

When John Cope lay dying he asked for a priest of the Episcopal Church that he might confess his sins. His nephew remarked, "That should not be necessary. Uncle John had no sins to confess." Many would be inclined to agree.



## JOHNSON'S DREAMLAND

The Iroquois chief who was visiting at Sir William Johnson's mansion (near what is now Johnstown) in 1750 was intrigued by the suit of clothes trimmed with gold lace which the baronet's tailor had just delivered.

The next morning the chief said to Sir William: "Me dream last night." "What did my brother dream?" asked Johnson. Quoth the redskin: "Me dream that you give me that fine suit of clothes." "They shall be yours," was the reply.

Some months later Johnson accompanied the chief on a visit to the Susquehanna valley and they spent a night at the Indian village of Wautegehe, situated where the Otego Creek flows into the river on what was known for years as the Van Woert farm.

In the morning Sir William greeted the chief with: "I, too, had a dream last night." "Ah," replied the warrior, "and what did my pale face brother dream?" Johnson made careful answer: "I dreamed you gave me a deed of all the lands I would see from yon eminence," pointing to the hill across the river. The chief hesitated before answering: "You shall have it but we will neither of us dream again."

Thus did "Johnson's Dreamland" come into being according to the story handed down from the earliest settlers. Some historians have called the entire story a fabrication while others, although contending that there was such a tract, have given it another location than our part of the Susquehanna valley.

Some claim that the dreamland tract was in Herkimer county and that the chief involved was Hendrick, a noted Mohawk sachem. Hendrick, however, had been in his grave five years by the time Johnson acquired the Herkimer land.

The same story is told of a tract in the Schoharie valley, Conrad Wieser (the younger) being the recipient of the land in this tale. There is no evidence whatever to substantiate this version.

It is known that Sir William Johnson was the first white man to acquire, by purchase, land in the upper Susquehanna valley west of the Charlotte. At one time or another he acquired title from the Indians to most of the land in the valley from the mouth of the Charlotte far into Pennsylvania.

A map of the Otego Patent shows a strip of land extending along the river from about a mile below Otego Creek to somewhat east of the present Oneonta city line and marked "lands of Sir William Johnson and others." The copy of the Otego Patent indicates that this strip was surveyed prior to the Otego grant, the latter following the marked trees of the former survey.

Those who claim that this strip embracing most of what is now the town and city of Oneonta, is the "dreamland", contend that Johnson did not own it by royal grant but acquired it as described above. They also claim that old deeds on file in Cooperstown refer to it as part of the "dreamland" tract.

Those of us who have lived for years in these pleasant surroundings, feel that nature made the country hereabouts a veritable dreamland. That being so, it matters little whether the story of how Sir William Johnson secured his acres is fact or pure legend.

## PERCY I. BUGBEE

"Some lives, I often think, are like those of Indian summer days that come after stormy autumn — serene, lovely, good days full of inner peace and richness, deep with a sense of harvest and homecoming. Dr. Bugbee is a life like that."

This tribute, written by playwright and author Emory B. Pottle (an ONS graduate) at the time of the retirement of Dr. Percy I. Bugbee as principal of Oneonta State Normal School, is a particularly apt characterization of one of the most beloved men who ever lived in Oneonta.

During the years that Dr. Bugbee ran the big red schoolhouse on Normal Hill, about six thousand students graduated from the institution, taking with them expert knowledge of the fine art of teaching and fond memories of one who was every inch a gentleman and a scholar.

Dr. Bugbee was born at Canton in 1858. He was graduated from St. Lawrence University in 1879 and for the next ten years was principal of schools at Naples and Newark. When Oneonta Normal opened in 1889 he became professor of mathematics, being one of fourteen teachers selected from 727 applicants.

Election to the principalship came in 1898 following the unfortunate incident concerning Dr. James M. Milne which we have previously discussed. For thirty-five years Dr. Bugbee was to guide the destinies of an institution known throughout the state for the quality of its instruction and the preeminence of its graduates.

The educational climate during much of his career was somewhat different than at present. In the early years the emphasis in normal schools was on academic subjects with professional training playing a minor role. Until 1909 the curriculum included a four year high school course (open only to residents of Oneonta, however).

It has been said that as an administrator Dr. Bugbee was a "benevolent paternalist". He interfered little with his faculty but he remained always the boss. He was essentially a conservative and his policies reflected that viewpoint.

Being somewhat adverse to change, he was slow in introducing new ideas but in this, however, he was only following the general tendency of the times.

As a human being Dr. Bugbee had no critics. He was a gentle person whose kindness and understanding came naturally. Many a deserving student had his load lightened by contributions from Dr. Bugbee's pocket. His love for the outdoors was deep, and hunting and fishing were his principal avocations.

Dr. Bugbee took a full part in the life of the city. For twenty years he was a member of the Oneonta Board of Education. He served on the local Draft Board throughout World War I, giving hundreds of hours of his time in that activity.

In 1933 a new practice school on the Normal campus was finished and named the Percy I. Bugbee School for Children. This was "... a fitting memorial to a great man who devoted his life to a great cause."

Dr. Bugbee retired in 1933 and died in 1935. He was buried in Glenwood Cemetery, in the city he loved so well and to which he had given so much of himself.

## MYSTERIOUS CRUMHORN

The lake and the mountain have been called "Crumhorn" for generations but the reason why is a question to which there seems to be no answer. Many theories have been advanced but there is little evidence to support any of them.

James Fenimore Cooper was probably right when he said: "Until future generations bring more to light, one answer is as good as another."

When the towns of Milford and Maryland were first settled, the Crumhorn section was regarded as amounting to little and was the last to be occupied. Sir William Johnson is said to have characterized it as "a worthless piece of land created by the Almighty for wild beasts and rattlesnakes."

Be that as it may, the fact is that the section, always sparsely settled, has turned out more public men than any other part of the two townships. Three clergymen, two lawyers, a physician, four merchants, an accountant, a hop dealer and two bankers first saw the light of day on Crumhorn Mountain.

It is probable that the region was once owned by Sir William Johnson under royal patent. One story is that about 1770 he made a grant to a man named Crumhorn from Columbia County. Certain it is that the area was called the Crumhorn Tract on the earliest maps of the county.

After the Revolution all royal grants reverted to the State. In the records of the University of the State of New York is this note: "This tract was by act of April 12, 1813, directed to be sold for the benefit of the Academies. The avails of this account amounted to \$10,416 and went into the general literary fund." This transaction covered 2,473 acres of the tract.

One story of the origin of the name is that a man named Crum lived on the mountain, which is shaped like a horn, hence "Crum's Horn." A Martin Krum did once own land there but the region had been named long before.

The most persistent story is that David Wilber (father of George I. and D. F.) once owned a famous cow with a deformed horn and that "crumpled horn" become "Crumhorn". The trouble with this tale is that the region was given its name long before David Wilber was born.

Another mystery involves the Wilber name. Records show that on January 1, 1816, George William Prevost deeded to David Wilber of Worcester 126 acres in Lot 8, Subdivision 8 of the McKee Patent (part of the Crumhorn tract). Who was this David Wilber? He was certainly not the David Wilber who once lived on the mountain and was later an Oneonta banker and Congressman, since the latter was not born until 1820.

One of the early settlers on the tract was Isaac Wilber, who came with his father from Duanesburg in 1837. His son David built a log cabin near the old Quaker cemetery and started raising hops. David and his sons, George I. and D. F., later became distinguished citizens of Oneonta.

The mountain has been a place of tragedy (Eva Coe murdered her handyman there) but it also has been a place of fun and frolic. During the '90s a summer hotel was built on the lake front by D. F. Wilber and was a favorite resort for Oneonta people. The site is now occupied by the Boy Scout camp.



## THE STREETS LIGHT UP

Dr. Meigs Case got pretty tired of getting out of his buckboard in front of his home at the corner of what are now Dietz and Wall Streets and missing the stepping block in the blackness of night. What he did about it was to have a gas light installed in front of the house. It was the first street light in Oneonta.

That was in 1873. Prior to then the feeble rays of light coming from the windows of homes and business places were the only guide for the pedestrian as he walked the streets after night had fallen.

Whether other householders followed suit is not a matter of record, but in 1875 the village stepped into the picture and contracted for the erection of fifteen lamps at strategic locations. These cost \$15 each, not including the pole. They burned naphtha, for which the corporation paid fifteen cents a gallon.

Eventually Oneonta was to have 79 of these lights. The gas company operated them although they were never connected to the gas mains.

Lafayette Stanton, whom older residents will remember, was an early lamp lighter. For three years, rain or shine, winter and summer, he traveled twenty miles a day lighting up Oneonta before dark. Only twice did he miss lighting every lamp, once when his horse fell and he suffered a sprained ankle and again during the blizzard of 1888 when the lamps blew out as fast as he could light them.

It took him two and a half hours to complete his rounds as each lamp had to be filled with a quart of naphtha. Ignition was with a blow torch since the burner had to be preheated so that it would generate gas from the liquid fuel.

The lamps were mounted on posts ten feet high so Stanton had to use a ladder until he conceived the idea of building a special horse cart with wheels as tall as a man and a high seat which brought him level with his work.

Early in the '90s electric arc lights replaced the naphtha lamps. These were of 1,500 candle power but were widely spaced. The first street lighting franchise (granted in 1888 but not put into effect until later) called for the installation of ten arc lights for a trial period. The cost to the village was fifty cents per light for each night it was used.

The carbons had to be changed at intervals and men of our generation will remember following the linemen from pole to pole and picking up the burned carbons they discarded. They made a fair crayon for writing on the sidewalk but we can recall no other use for them. There is a point in every boy's life, however, when mere possession of even a useless object is a joy in itself.

Sometime in the early 'teen years the arc lights were replaced by incandescent bulbs. These were not of as high candle power as the arcs but they gave a softer light and needed little attention.

At the present time there are 672 incandescent street lights in the city. They vary in illuminating strength from 100 to 600 candle power with more than 400 being of 400 candle power.

In 1957, 80 fluorescent lights were installed on the main business streets. These are of 2,300 candle power each and make our principal thoroughfares as well lighted as those of any city in the United States.

## THEY WERE HERE FIRST

The seal of the city of Oneonta bears the head of an Indian with full headdress. The representation is not quite correct since the redskins who lived hereabouts wore only one or two feathers in their topknots but it does point up the fact that this was once Indian country, the home of the Algonquin and the Iroquois for thousands of years.

Since the white man first made this valley his abode, thousands of Indian artifacts, mostly fashioned from native stone or from flint and chert, have been found. These include implements of war and of the chase, such as arrow and spear points; articles of domestic use like mortars and pestles, axes, scrapers and fragments of pottery; articles of personal use and religious significance such as gorgets and pendants, pipes, banner stones and amulets.

Most of the artifacts are of material found hereabouts but some are made of such foreign stone as chalcedony from the West and jasper and argillite from the South. Marine shell beads and adornments of copper and mica indicate the extent of the trade carried on during the later stages of Indian culture.

Roland B. Hill, the most knowledgeable Indian archaeologist in this region since Willard E. Yager, made a thorough study of the aboriginal cultures some years ago and published an authoritative classification.

First came the Archaic Occupation which started thousands of years ago. Artifacts of this culture have been found in quantity all along the upper Susquehanna, usually near the confluence of a small stream. The Wilcox flats near the river bridges and the VanWoert farm near the mouth of the Otego Creek have yielded many specimens.

Next occurred the Second Period Algonquin Occupation. Of this culture are the village sites at the mouth of the Schenevus Creek at Colliers and on Slade's Flats where the Charlotte flows into the Susquehanna. The Parish Farm, or Pony Farm, site, two miles below Oneonta, is a camp site of this period.

The Early Third Period Occupation was next. The hilltop workshop site at the head of Prosser Hollow and the Wilber Lake site, a mile north of the upper reservoir, are camp sites of this period. The last Algonquin occupation was the Late Third Period, which shows much Iroquois influence.

The last occupation was that of the Iroquois, who came into the area probably about the middle of the 17th century. We know the most about this Indian since his occupation coincided in part with that of the white man, but he left comparatively few artifacts. The only camp site of any size is now deep under the waters of Good-year Lake.

There are several reasons for the lack of Iroquois specimens. First of all, there were few Iroquois (mostly Mohawks and Oneidas) in the valley. Mr. Yager gives a tentative figure of five hundred as compared with perhaps four times that many Algonquins.

Secondly, the Iroquois were here for not much more than a century while the Algonquin occupation goes back well beyond the time of Christ. Furthermore, the Iroquois were in constant struggle with the Andastes to the south and our part of the valley was a no man's land where it was not safe to live for any length of time.

## REDPATH CHAUTAUQUA

It would be a great week for those Oneontans who desired culture and refined entertainment. The Redpath Chautauqua had arrived in town and that was a pretty important event in the days before radio and television.

The crew of college students made short work of erecting the big tent in Wilber Park and arranging the benches and folding chairs that would seat the season ticket holders. At the first afternoon session the chairman of the sponsoring committee introduced the Chautauqua manager, who was always the superintendent of some city school system (our own Dr. George J. Dann was on the circuit for some years). He outlined the week's program and got things started.

Let's go back to 1925 and see what was offered the seven hundred and fifty ticket holders. There were several speakers on inspirational and educational subjects. Charles H. Plattenburg discussed "A Modern Tale of Two Cities" and Fred B. Smith talked on "The World Outlook". Frank H. Hollman, the country's leading pigeon fancier, described the role carrier pigeons played in World War I and Evelyn Hansen delighted the ladies with her talk on "Home Decorating".

Lawrence C. Jones, principal of the Piney Woods School for Negroes at Braxton, Miss., discussed "The Race Problem". A quartet of women from the school furnished music.

Other musical outfits heard during the week were the Royal Marimba Band, the Victorian Ensemble and the Elsie Baker-Grover Tilden duo. A full cast and chorus presented Victor Herbert's operetta, "Sweethearts".

The drama was represented by a group of Broadway actors who presented "Adam and Eva" and "So This is London". Two teams of college students debated questions of international importance.

The children were not neglected. There was a Junior Chautauqua with a trained children's worker entertaining the boys and girls and drilling them for a pageant on the last day.

The whole thing started back in 1874 when the first Chautauqua was held in the little village of that name in western New York. This developed into an annual eight weeks of lectures, music and operas. Soon educational credits were being given for attendance and the summer school movement had started.

The idea spread and communities throughout the nation began holding their own Chautauquas, getting their speakers and entertainers through the big lecture bureaus. These soon saw the commercial possibilities in the situation and launched traveling Chautauquas which eventually went into every corner of the land.

The biggest of these was the Redpath Chautauqua, the one that visited Oneonta annually from 1914 through 1931. For the first four years the tent was pitched on what is now the upper level of Huntington Park.

A sufficient number of tickets had been sold to insure a return in 1932 but the depression worsened and Redpath, as well as the other companies, closed out this phase of its activities.

Thus ended a phenomenon of American life which had brought instruction and entertainment to millions.



## AN INDIAN FIGHTER

It could be said without too much exaggeration that one shot from the rifle of Tim Murphy changed the course of the American Revolution. Certain it is that the death of General Simon Fraser, one of the best officers in the British army, assured victory for the Continentals in the battle of Saratoga and that triumph was the turning point of the war.

But the killing of Fraser was only one of the exploits of as colorful a character as ever appeared on the American scene. Not even Daniel Boone could rival the deeds of this soldier and Indian fighter, who once owned much land in and about Oneonta and who lived for a short time on Southside.

Little is known of the early life of Timothy Murphy and many asserted facts are highly contradictory. His shadowy figure weaves in and out of such historical novels as "The Maid-at-Arms" and "Little Red Foot" but he has lacked a James Fenimore Cooper or a Ned Buntline to give him immortality.

Ireland, Virginia and Pennsylvania have claimed him but it is probable that he was born in Minnisink, N. J. in 1751 of immigrant Irish parents and that when he was six the family moved to Shamokin Flats, Pa. (now Sunbury).

At the outset of the Revolution, Murphy enlisted in the Pennsylvania Battalion of Riflemen with whom he fought at Bunker Hill and in the battle of Long Island. At the end of his enlistment he joined a regiment of the Pennsylvania Line and was with Washington when he crossed the Delaware at Trenton.

He later joined Colonel Daniel Morgan's Riflemen, one of the most picturesque outfits in the American army and was with that unit when he shot Fraser at Saratoga. He was at Valley Forge during the terrible winter and was then sent to the Schoharie Valley with three companies of Morgan's corps.

Prior to this time all Murphy's fighting had been against British regulars. Now he was to experience an entirely different type of warfare as the Schoharie Valley was under constant attack by Indians, English and Tories. It was here that Tim earned renown as an Indian fighter.

His marksmanship with his double barrelled rifle, which used a conical bullet, struck terror among the redskins. Hundreds of fantastic stories have been told of his incredible bravery and his narrow escapes from death. Some are undoubtedly true but others are pure legend.

Murphy was on Clinton's Expedition down the Susquehanna, following which he returned to Schoharie and helped defend the three forts against incessant attack.

Following the war, Murphy settled in Fultonham and married Margaret Feek, by whom he had nine children. She died in 1807 and in 1810 he married Mary Robertson. They had four sons. Many descendants of the great fighter still live in Otsego, Delaware and Schoharie Counties.

Murphy had extensive land holdings in the Schoharie, Schenectady, Charlotte and Susquehanna valleys and lived for a short time on the Southside acreage known as the Slade farm. It is probable that Asa Emmons bought the land from him. He, or one of his sons, once owned part of the E. R. Ford farm.

Timothy Murphy died in 1818 and was buried in the Middleburgh cemetery. His second wife lies in the cemetery in Davenport Center.

## THE MEETING PLACE

When you were a kid, where did you go for your Jackson balls and licorice sticks, your peppermint lozenges and chocolate drops? Laskaris', of course.

When you got into high school where did you take your best girl of the moment after the movies or that class dance? Laskaris', of course.

As you grew older where did you meet your friends to discuss business or just to talk over a cup of coffee? Laskaris', of course.

Those situations would apply to generations of Oneontans for this soda fountain, and later restaurant, was a place of rendezvous for young and old alike for over half a century. When the proprietor died a few months ago a door closed on a good bit of Oneonta's past.

John G. Laskaris was born in 1875 near Sparta in the Greek Peloponnesus. With his brother Harry he came to Oneonta in 1898 and, on the same day that Company G marched off to the Spanish-American War, started a fruit and candy shop where Brackett's is now.

The original capital was two hundred dollars and the first counters were boards laid across boxes. Some fruit on an outdoor stand and a little candy and a few trays of nuts inside were the first stock in trade. The business prospered and soon a soda fountain was installed and the place blossomed into a full fledged ice cream parlor.

In 1905 John returned to his native land to marry Sophia Georgeson. Upon their return they were accompanied by her brother, Nicholas Georgeson. In 1911 brother Harry went back to Greece to fight the Turks and John took over sole management of the store.

The business continued to grow and in 1929 Mr. Laskaris purchased the block on the corner of Main and Dietz Streets then occupied by the hardware store of Walter L. Brown. Extensive remodeling was done and the business was moved there in 1920. At first it was strictly an ice cream and candy store but food items were gradually added until in about five years a well equipped restaurant was in operation.

The place soon became a favorite eating place of business and professional people, as well as of High School and Normal students. For years it was known as "Little City Hall" because of the political discussions which took place and the business conducted informally by city officials. About 1930 Gus Chrones, who had married a daughter, became a partner.

John Laskaris early became an integral part of the social life of the village. He was elected a member of the Oneonta Club in a day when "foreigners" were considered suspect by that sacrosanct organization and took a full part in its activities. He became one of the best bowlers in town and few could beat him at pinochle. He was also an Elk and a Mason.

The business was discontinued in 1949 and the store altered as a dress shop for his daughters. John Laskaris then retired to spend summers in Oneonta and winters in Florida, where he died on January 31, 1963. An era had ended.

## 'T WAS EVER THUS

It would appear that the attitude of taxpayers toward bond issues hasn't changed much through the years. In 1854 trustees of the village asked permission of the taxpayers to raise money for certain public purposes. This was not a real bond issue but the effect would have been the same.

The trustees wanted to build fire reservoirs, repair the fire engine, buy a plot of land and erect a firehouse thereon. Total cost: \$385. Result of the vote: No.

Four years later the proposition was again placed before the voters and again they turned it down. There hadn't been a fire in the village for 50 years so why spend good money to protect against something that just wasn't going to happen?

But it did happen and in that same year of 1858. The house occupied by William and A. E. Bissell and standing on the site now occupied by the Elks Club, burned to the ground. The Oneonta Herald said of this fire: "No engine, no hose, nor buckets nor organized fire company, nor anything to battle with the fire."

On the wall of the first floor corridor of the Municipal Building is a bronze plaque memorializing Collis P. Huntington as the first chief of the Oneonta Fire Department. In a technical sense only is this true. The man who was to become one of the great railroad builders and to found one of the largest American fortunes, was the captain of the first fire company in the township of Oneonta.

This organization of 20 prominent citizens was gaily uniformed and had a fire engine called "Yankee" of unrecorded man power. Fire Engine Company No. 1 apparently had everything it needed except fires to fight. During its short existence the company members never heard a fire bell rung in anger.

It was not until 1876 that an Oneonta Fire Department was organized with the formation of a steamer company and a hose company. James H. Keyes was the first chief engineer of the department and hence was actually Oneonta's first fire chief.

Until the water works was completed in 1882 lack of water was a constant difficulty. There was a series of small reservoirs located in various parts of the village with one behind the Fire House, one in the First Baptist Church yard and others at the corners of Church and Cherry, Chestnut and West and Maple and Walnut Streets. Remains of the last mentioned were found last year by workmen excavating.

These reservoirs had a capacity of about 1,800 gallons each. A modern fire pumper could have emptied one in not much over a minute.



## MORE OLD HOUSES

Let's take a look at a few more Oneonta houses, some old and some not so ancient. Who built them and when, and who has lived within those walls?

The house at 48 Dietz Street now occupied by the medical and law offices of the brothers Rowley was built in 1883 by Jesse K. Cutler, a local merchant. In 1887 it was purchased by Collis P. Huntington for the use of his sister, Mrs. E. H. Purdy. Later her daughter, Mrs. Matie Loveland, lived there as did the latter's daughter, Mrs. F. D. Watkeys.

The house next above, until recently the home and office of Dr. C. Douglas Rowley, was built in 1903 by Mrs. Martin Covert. It was for years the residence and office of Dr. Stanton Hendrick, a relative of the Rowleys.

Simeon R. Barnes, a contractor, built in 1890 the brick edifice at 35 Ford Avenue, now a rooming house. It was once owned by William H. Smith, a hop dealer and onetime alderman, and later by Arthur M. Butts, pioneer automobile dealer. It replaced a wooden dwelling which was moved and is now the double house at the corner of Main and Hunt Streets owned by Menzo Norton.

The large house at 41 Elm Street at the corner of Oak was erected in 1890 by Thomas Doyle, a partner with Charles Smith (later a banker, assemblyman, IBM director and Grand Master of Masons) in the big cigar making firm of Doyle and Smith. It was later occupied for years by Doyle's son-in-law, Laverne P. Butts, a dealer in builders' supplies and once an assemblyman.

The dwelling on the other corner of Elm and Oak was erected in 1881 by E. P. Chapman. It has been occupied by various persons, including Dr. Frederick Johnson, and was once owned by Hartwick College.

The house on the bank at 132 Chestnut Street was built in 1872 by Charles A. Jones, D.&H. master mechanic. It was the residence for years of Mrs. Helen Elbersson, once principal of the Laurens Central School, and of her daughter, Miss Florence Elbersson, a teacher in the Oneonta system.

Dr. Edwin J. Morgan, a prominent local dentist for many years, built the house at 23 Watkins Avenue in 1872 soon after the street was opened through the farm of Timothy Watkins. It was long the home of his son, Wendell R. Morgan, a well known real estate man, and then until recently of the latter's widow, Mrs. Mabel B. Morgan.

Dr. Alexander F. Carson's home at 28 Watkins Avenue has always been occupied by a physician. It was built in 1881 by Dr. G. F. Entler on a lot purchased from Timothy Watkins for \$600. It was later the home and office of Dr. A. W. Cutler.

The house at 2 Academy Place directly back of the Eagles Club is one of the oldest in the city. We have not been able to ascertain when and by whom it was erected but Christian Uebel, a band leader and music instructor who had received his education in Germany, lived there in 1856. This was several years before Academy Street was opened from Grove to Fairview. The old Union School had not yet been built and the Baptist Cemetery occupied the land where the school cafeteria now is.

Another very old house on Academy Street is that at No. 40, which was built in 1840 by parties unknown.

## NED BUNTLINE

As it must to all men, death came at last, in 1886, to Edward Zane Carroll Judson, probably to the great relief of the Dark Angel, for she had touched him many times, only to have her icy grip shaken off.

For this Delaware County man was the fabulous Ned Buntline, writer of dime novels, soldier, sailor and adventurer, whose own exploits and escapades were vastly more improbable than those of the characters in the hundreds of lurid stories which he wrote.

Judson was born in Stamford in 1823, the scion of a family which had helped found the community in 1789. When he was still in dresses the family moved to Pennsylvania. While in his early teens he ran away from home and shipped before the mast, sailing the *Seven Seas* for some years.

A daring sea rescue earned him a commission as a Navy midshipman but he soon resigned and joined the Army for the Seminole War. That over, he went to work for a fur company and learned the West as he had learned the sea. The Mexican War then engaged his attention. During all this time he had been writing stories of high adventure for papers and magazines.

After the Mexican War he went to New York and started a weekly called "Ned Buntline's Own", filled with stories of piracy and the West. About this time he helped organize the infamous "Know Nothing" political party and led the famous Astor Place riot, which scrape got him a year in jail.

He was released in time to join up for the Civil War. He emerged from that conflict with twenty bullets in his body and the rank of colonel. He then headed West where, with Wild Bill Hickok, Bill Cody and other scouts he went through another series of harebrained adventures and hairbreadth escapes from death.

Buntline saw in Cody fame and fortune. He dubbed him "Buffalo Bill" and, returning to New York, gave the publishing firm of Street and Smith, a story entitled "Buffalo Bill, King of the Border Men." Thus began the saga and legend of Buffalo Bill, probably the most indestructible character in all fiction.

Week after week, month after month the stories appeared. The public could not get enough of the man with the flowing beard and the quick Winchester. Few suspected that Buntline was writing pure fiction.

Ned returned to Stamford in 1871 and thereafter called the village his home. He married a local girl, despite the fact that he had wives in Westchester, one in New York City and possibly a few more.

Buntline was a born philanderer, a trait which caused him trouble throughout his life. One of his narrowest escapes came after he had killed a popular citizen in Nashville in a quarrel over the latter's wife. An irate mob hung him from an awning post but the rope broke and he was revived.

After 1876 Buntline spent more and more time in Stamford and finally settled there for good in "Eagles Nest", the home which he had built on the back road to Hobart. He fished and hunted, made temperance and patriotic speeches and wrote, always wrote.

His many wounds finally caught up with him and in 1886 he died and was buried in a Stamford cemetery by his G.A.R. comrades.

## A VILLAGE CHURCHYARD

"Beneath those rugged elms, that yew tree's shade,  
Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap,  
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,  
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep."

Thomas Gray wrote of a quiet country churchyard in old England but his words also describe Oneonta's Riverside Cemetery where rest those who conquered the wilderness, created the town and plotted its destiny.

As you stand amid its beauty and its solitude you have a feeling that the community's history is all about you. Each stone has a meaning, each graven name evokes memories of men and women whose brief appearance on life's stage has its significance for us of 1963.

It is not known when the first burial was made in the oldest of the city's cemeteries but it was probably near 1800. Frederick Brown came to the settlement in 1798 and bought of the VanDerwerkers a farm which embraced much of the present city.

In 1805 Brown gave to the Presbyterian Society the land now occupied by the church and parsonage and the cemetery. It is probable that the old part of the grounds on the bluff overlooking South Main Street was first used as a private burial plot by the Brown family. This section is not mapped and what records there may have been have long since disappeared. Some graves are marked but many are not. It is known that eight Revolutionary soldiers are buried here but the graves of only three have been located.

The reason why the cemetery is called "Riverside" has puzzled many. When the burial ground was first laid out, and until 1815, the Susquehanna flowed at the foot of the Prospect Street bluff and the cemetery was in fact by the river side.

The cemetery remained under control of the church until 1860 when the River Side Cemetery Association was organized with E. R. Ford, who had bought the Brown farm, as the first president. The Association purchased the site from the church and has conducted the affairs of the cemetery for more than a century.

All of the lots in Riverside Cemetery were sold more than fifty years ago and few grave sites are left. The result is that many of the descendants of the pioneer families have been forced to buy lots elsewhere.

On Memorial Day the cemetery is bright with flags, for about 130 veterans are buried there. Most are Civil War veterans although there are some who served in the Revolution, the War of 1812, the Spanish-American conflict and both World Wars.

Here lie millionaires and paupers (part of the rear portion was once potter's field). Here are McDonalds and Huntingtons, Fords and Morrises. Over there can be found Wallings and Emmons, Bakers and Dietzes, Blends and Bornts. The old names — Yager, Marble and Saunders, Fairchild and Morenus, Smith, McCrum and Couse and many others — they are all there.

Riverside Cemetery — seven acres of local history!



## AMERICAN INSTITUTION

The family had risen at dawn and the farm chores were done. The cows were milked and in the pasture, the dishes were washed and brother had, very reluctantly, fed the calves and filled the kitchen woodbox. The lunch had been packed the night before.

Mother and father climbed into the front seat of the surrey (with the fringe on top) while brother and sister fought for the side of the back seat where the spring wasn't broken. That argument settled, the family set off for Oneonta, or Morris, or Cooperstown or for one of a dozen other towns. It was Fair time in almost any year until well after the turn of the century.

The Fair as an American institution has not completely vanished. It is an annual event at Norwich, Cobleskill, Walton and Afton and the Otsego County Fair is held regularly at Morris. But the day when nearly every village of any size had one has gone with the horse and buggy, the bicycle and the bustle.

The Fair was born of man's need to have his handiwork admired and of his hunger for entertainment. Fairs of one sort or another have been held throughout the world for countless centuries and it was only natural that Americans should follow the custom of their forebears.

The first Fairs in this country lasted but a day and were held in some convenient pasture. They gave the farmer a chance to show his prime Hereford or Jersey cattle, his Cheviot lambs and his Cochinchina poultry while his wife could display her yarn carpets and patchwork quilts, her johnny cake and green tomato pickles.

There was little entertainment at first, only an impromptu horse race or two and perhaps a performance by a traveling medicine show but there was much talk of crops and breeds and politics and more than a little gossiping among the women folk.

The Fair gradually developed into a settled institution with enclosed grounds, a half mile track for horse racing, buildings for the exhibits, stables and perhaps a grandstand. Entertainment features multiplied, always including a balloon ascension and parachute drop.

Franklin had a Fair as early as 1864. This was held on the Betts farm in what is now the center of the village. Davenport had a Fair until about 1892 and Sidney one until the beginning of the century.

Garrattsville and Edmeston, Unadilla, Otsego and Milford once had good Fairs. Within the memory of many are the exhibitions once held at Margaretville and Delhi, Cooperstown, Richfield Springs and Schenectady.

The Morris Fair, now the only one in the county, started in 1877 and ran continuously, with the exception of one year, until 1938. It was then suspended until 1946 and has been running since that time with help from the County. It is conducted according to the agricultural and educational formula that made early Fairs so successful.

The Oneonta Fair, one of the largest in the state, was organized in 1872 and ran until 1926, when it was discontinued and the land sold for the real estate development that includes Belmont Circle and part of Hudson Street.

## BACK IN 1922

People in Oneonta were pretty excited about the World Series during that October week forty years ago and the words on every lip were "Yanks" and "Giants". But they were the New York Giants, not the big boys from the West Coast, and all the games were at the Polo Grounds, the Yankee Stadium being a year away.

In 1922 you couldn't sit in the comfort of your home and watch the game unfold on television. If you wanted a running account of the action (and hundreds did) you stood on Broad Street in front of the Star office and listened to Clarence Slade or Ed Moore megaphone the play from an upstairs window. They got the results each half inning by Western Union telegraph.

The Giants won that year, four games to none with one contest a tie. The Yanks were no match for John McGraw's team, which boasted such stars as Art Nehf, Frankie Frisch, Heinie Groh, Casey Stengel, Highpockets Kelly and Irish Meusel. Babe Ruth was a flop with but a single and a double in seventeen tries.

But even the fall classic couldn't keep the minds of Oneontans off the strike of Delaware and Hudson shop workers. The shops were running full blast but only with the help of imported strike breakers quartered in the Wilson House and in wooden barracks constructed in the yards. This tragic episode caused wounds which are still festering.

Otherwise things in town were in a state of normalcy. The depression which followed World War I was over and the crescendo of the Roaring Twenties was building up. Business was good and getting better and the effects of prohibition were bad and getting worse.

The Ku Klux Klan was trying to get a foothold in the city and there was an occasional parade of men gowned and masked in white. At infrequent intervals crosses burned against the night sky. But this evil growth could get no sustenance from our tolerant soil and the movement withered on the vine.

At an American Legion meeting the young organization voted to sponsor a Boy Scout troop and watched a boxing exhibition between Robert and Walter Hodges, five and six year old sons of Louis Hodges. The High School basketball season had started and Coach Riley had said that his starting five would be Ben Dilello, Don Charles, Stan Monohan, Warren Bush and Pete Molinari.

The Common Council, with Mayor C. C. Miller presiding, voted to pay the Oneonta Water Company \$1,825 for the rental of fire hydrants for a six month period. This would be the last bill as the city was preparing to take over the water system. The Council felt that Oneonta should be zoned but voted not to hire Herbert Swain to do the job for \$2,250.

Dr. Benjamin H. Johns had just resigned as pastor of the First Methodist Church. Dr. Leon H. Wayman had purchased a home at 22 Central Avenue and would reside there when he returned from his honeymoon.

That October period forty years ago was a week like all weeks, filled with events significant and trivial, but a spirit of optimism was in the air. The world had been forever purged of war. Two chickens were being prepared for every pot and two automobiles built for every garage.

## WHERE INDIANS LIVED

Go down the winding Susquehanna from the Glimmerglass to the sea and, if you know where to look, you can find the sites of Indian villages, some of which were old when Christ was born.

The general rule is that sites are near the junction of a tributary stream and the river but the difficulty lies in finding where the water ran in ancient days, for man and the elements have combined to change the bed of the Susquehanna in many places.

The villages stood in large clearings planted with maize, corn and beans. One story "long houses" fifteen to twenty by fifty to one hundred feet in size each sheltered several families, related through the mother. These dwellings were built of saplings covered with bark or hides.

We will identify some of these village sites. At the head of Otsego Lake there seems to have been no village occupation, although there are many camp sites. At the foot there was once a large town, probably Iroquoian.

You might expect to find an ancient site at the confluence of Cherry Valley Creek but there is no evidence. The first indisputable site down river is at the mouth of the Schenevus where the main village was on the flat on the east bank, extending from about the highway bridge to beyond the old school. Gideon Hawley observed this village when he went down the stream in 1753 and gave it the name of "Tionadel-oga". This is a site of great antiquity.

Four miles down the river was the famous village of "Adequantaga" on the Slade flats at the outlet of the Charlotte. In 1887 a freshet exposed the old site. This was an ancient town little touched by the civilization of the white man. It was probably occupied by the Mohawks not later than 1630 and by Algonquin tribes before that.

The next important site was near the mouth of the Otego Creek. The course of the river and the face of the land in that locality have changed to such an extent that this site has been difficult to locate. Before the railroad came in 1865 a large tract of land now on the north side of the river was on the south side.

In those days, at a point about a half mile west of the present lower river bridge, the stream bent away northeastward across the valley to the high terrace on which is what we now call "the Plains". It then turned southwest along the foot of the bluff and finally swung southeast and back across the valley to the foot of the south hills.

River Street, west of the lower viaduct, passes along the north bank of the old channel for a short distance. This northward curve formed a big loop of land on the south side of the river. To avoid building two bridges, the railroad people cut a new channel across the neck of the loop and that is where the river now runs.

The village site, once known as "Wautegehe" (hence Otego) was originally on the south side of the river but is now some distance back from the north bank and about a half mile up from the mouth of Otego Creek. Its burial place was about where the Scramling pioneers were laid to rest.



## PIONEER FLYER

It seemed at the time that it would be a long while before the altitude record which Frank Burnside set at Bath on July 26, 1913, would be broken. The Oneonta had guided his Thomas-Morse biplane 12,950 feet into the air and the difficulties of going farther into space seemed insurmountable.

Aviation would progress to achievements inconceivable fifty years ago but the advance would have been impossible but for the pioneering of such men as Burnside, one of the first of the country's birdmen.

Frank Burnside was born in Oneonta on August 7, 1888. He grew up here and in his teen years began indulging in a sport which so many boys of his generation embraced — motorcycle riding and racing. He, Earl Fritts and Archie Reid formed a triumvirate whose interest in gasoline motors was consuming.

Burnside was with Fritts when Walter Johnson gave exhibition flights at the Oneonta Fair in September of 1911. The flying bug bit him and his buddy and before the end of the year both had graduated from the Thomas Brothers Flying School at Bath and were among the few men in the world licensed to fly airplanes.

Fritts returned to Oneonta, barnstormed for a few months and then retired from flying. Burnside went on to become one of the best known of the early pilots.

He became an exhibition flying instructor and chief test pilot for Thomas Brothers and continued with the company when it was reorganized as Thomas-Morse Aircraft Corporation and moved to Ithaca.

The Grossman Picture Corporation, one of the early motion picture companies, was making "flickers" at Ithaca and Burnside flew in some of the first pictures in which planes were used. Among the movie stars he piloted were Irene Castle, Lillian Walker and Edith Day.

In 1914 Burnside made the first flight in what is now the Dominican Republic and the next year he transported a seaplane to Rio de Janeiro and gave many Brazilians their first taste of air travel. He was the first man able to get a plane into the rarefied air of mile high Ely, Nevada, and the first man to fly from Miami to Havana.

Burnside assisted in the development of the radio beam method of plane guidance by making many test flights for the Army at Fort Monmouth, N. J. At about this time he participated in the famous seaplane race down the Hudson from Albany to New York sponsored by the New York Times.

The Oneonta pilot was one of the pioneers of airmail flying. As an employee of the National Transportation Corporation he flew the night mail from Cleveland to Chicago. In this endeavor his path often crossed that of another airmail pioneer, Charles A. Lindbergh.

In 1935 a flood filled the cellar of his home at Bath. In clearing out the debris he picked up an infection from which he died on August 26 in Cleveland. The many medals and awards which Burnside had received during his adventurous career were presented by his widow to the Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson Field, Dayton, Ohio.

## THE TROLLEY CARS

With Dr. Albert D. Getman, one of the prime movers in the newly organized Oneonta and Otego Valley Railroad, at the controls, the electric trolley moved cautiously along Chestnut Street one Friday morning in July of 1898. The cars had arrived the day before and this was the trial run.

Meanwhile, back at the powerhouse on Market Street, hellwasapoppin. Something had gone wrong and the energy flowing from the dynamo was wreaking havoc with the village telephone system. Fuses were blowing out all over town.

The phone company moved fast and when the car reached Main Street on its return trip from West, Undersheriff Snyder handed Dr. Getman an injunction halting all operations. It was Tuesday before repairs were made, the stop order was lifted and the road was officially opened.

The first streetcars in Oneonta were horse drawn affairs. The company which operated the line was organized in 1888 with a capital stock of \$20,000, half of which was held by the Wilber family.

The rails ran from the village line at East End down Main to Chestnut and along that street to Fonda Avenue. Three cars operated on a sixteen minute headway. Tickets were five cents each. The horse car railroad was started to provide transportation to Wilber Park, an amusement spot operated by George I. Wilber and located in a small gorge at the head of Park Street about where the home of Duncan Briggs now stands.

Interest in the electrification of the Oneonta Street Railway was shown as early as 1893 when a group of New York capitalists tried to buy the line. The Wilbers had a good thing going and refused to sell. Finally in 1896 a group of Oneonta investors bought the company. In 1897 the Oneonta and Otego Valley Railroad was incorporated with Walter Whipple, Frank Gould, H. H. Getman, Dr. A. D. Getman, S. B. Gardner and H. W. Lee as directors.

The rails were extended to West Oneonta and additional trackage laid in Oneonta. The line to West Oneonta went along Chestnut Street to Oneida, thence to what is now Country Club Road and, following that lane, down Bull Hill and across the flat. This route was changed in 1902 to one following a projection of Chestnut Street across Oneida.

In Oneonta village a line was built from Main down Broad to the D.&H. station and another from Broad along Market to the car barns at the foot of Chestnut. Another branch left Chestnut at Church, proceeded along that street to Center and thence to Maple and the Normal School. A short spur connected the Main Street line with the Fair Grounds by way of Tilton Avenue and Fair Street.

Four closed cars were operated by the road. A thirty minute service to West Oneonta was maintained with two cars, while two others gave twenty minute service to the Normal and East End. Two open cars were used during Fair Week and on special occasions.

In later years the line was pushed northward to Mohawk with a branch from Index to Cooperstown.

## FROM VALLEY TO VALLEY

Few Oneontans have ever heard of the Southern New York Railroad and yet this tiny line bisects the Country Club golf course and players occasionally see a freight train pass over the right of way.

With its two and four-tenths miles of track between the D.&H. and West Oneonta, the Southern New York is one of the shortest railroads in the country. There was a day, however, when this trolley line connected the Susquehanna and Mohawk valleys; when electric passenger cars traveled over its sixty miles of track once each way every hour of the day, carrying hundreds of passengers and tons of freight.

In the last story we told how the Oneonta and Otsego Valley Railroad absorbed the Oneonta Street Railroad and pushed the line to West Oneonta. In 1899 the little railroad ran into serious financial trouble and service was suspended for about three months.

Herbert T. Jennings, a New York capitalist, bailed the company out and launched a scheme to lay the rails northward to the Mohawk valley. The route chosen was via Laurens, Mt. Vision, Hartwick, Index, Fly Creek and Schuyler Lake to Richfield Springs, with a branch line running from Index to Cooperstown.

In 1900 work was started on the Oneonta, Cooperstown and Richfield Springs Railroad, the first job being the construction of a spur to connect the line with the D.&H. Cooperstown was reached in 1901 and Richfield Springs the following year. The road was completed to Mohawk in 1904 and an arrangement made to use the New York Central tracks into Herkimer.

The completion of the road was not easy of accomplishment. There were many difficulties of construction; there were strikes and riots and accidents galore, some of them fatal; and there was no end to financial difficulties.

The road did a booming business but Jennings was continually in hot water. He lost control, regained it, and then lost it for good when the line was foreclosed and was reorganized as the Oneonta and Mohawk Valley Railroad.

In 1907 the Colliers dam and hydro-electric plant were built to supplement the steam power plant at Hartwick and to provide light and power for homes and industries along the right of way.

Good business continued but so did money troubles. The company was reorganized several times, becoming successively the Otsego and Herkimer Railroad, the Southern New York Power and Railroad Company and finally the Southern New York Railroad.

The East End and Normal lines in Oneonta were abandoned in 1923 and in 1931 a terminal was built near Oneida Street and the road stopped running into the city. Passenger service ended in 1933 and freight service in 1941, leaving only the short line from the D.&H. to West Oneonta.

In its heyday the line operated amusement places at Otsego Park between West Oneonta and Laurens, and at Canadarago Lake and ran frequent excursions to those popular resorts. A sumptuous parlor car, complete with white uniformed porter, made daily trips to and from Utica at only fifteen cents extra charge.

The trolley line is gone but it is certainly not forgotten by those who appreciated its convenience and enjoyed its pleasures.



## W. IRVING BOLTON

That the Oneonta Building and Loan Association is no longer the "kid brother" of the city's conventional banks but stands beside them as a full partner in the financial structure which serves the needs of the community, is due in no small part to the efforts of W. Irving Bolton, a truly remarkable man.

But W. I. Bolton did not function solely in the role of banker. He was a teacher, a school administrator, a lawyer and a politician. He was Oneonta's first city judge and the only man to hold that office as well as those of alderman and mayor. Add to these roles those of good husband, father and private citizen and you have a pretty impressive total.

Washington Irving Bolton was born in the town of Burlington in 1869 and was the son of Alonzo and Adelaide (Gregory) Bolton. He attended the common schools in that township and then entered the Oneonta State Normal School, from which he was graduated in 1894. He taught school in Mt. Vision and Laurens for about five years and then served six years as a School Commissioner.

During the latter period he read law in his spare time in the office of Douglas W. Miller in Oneonta. He was admitted to the bar in 1906 and in that year began the practice of law here.

In 1913 Mr. Bolton joined the Oneonta Building and Loan Association as its attorney and secretary-treasurer. The latter position was equivalent in those days to that of manager.

He soon learned what it takes to be a good banker. Under his management the Association began to grow at a steady rate. It had been organized in 1888 but in the early years its growth, although solid, was slow. In 1913, when Mr. Bolton took charge, the assets were slightly under a half million dollars.

Under his guidance the assets rose to over eleven and a half millions in the year before his death. In 1949 he became president and was succeeded as secretary-treasurer by his son, Danforth D. Bolton, now president.

W. I. Bolton's reputation as a skilfull administrator of this type of institution was widespread and in 1940 he became head of the state organization of Building and Loan Associations. He was also a director of the Wilber National Bank.

Mr. Bolton first entered politics in 1908 when he was elected as the first judge of the newly chartered city of Oneonta. He served two terms in that position. Several terms as alderman from the Fourth Ward followed and he was then mayor during the years 1924 and 1925.

On June 26, 1895, he was married to Harriet Della Walling. They had three children, Ernest W., Danforth D., and Lila, now the wife of Carl VanBuren. Mrs. Bolton, who celebrated her ninetieth birthday a few months ago, is as fine a woman as her husband was a man.

Mr. Bolton was a faithful member of the First Methodist Church and belonged to the Masonic Lodge and Chapter. His hobby was flower growing and the Bolton gardens were something to see.

W. Irving Bolton died on January 30, 1957, and was buried in Glenwood Cemetery. His influence persists, however, in the institution which he raised to a position of eminence.

## EYES OF THE ARMY

Sherman Fairchild had been trying to get into the war for months but "no" was the repeated answer of the army doctors. Now had come his chance to serve his country, and in the field of photography, where, although he was only twenty, he was already an expert. No wonder his heart sang as he set out from Oneonta to review the Signal Corps problem.

At this stage of World War I the "eyes of the army" were weak. There was an aerial camera of sorts but it was unreliable and had no perception in depth. A somewhat better model had been built but the engineers could not perfect a way of moving the film through the camera.

It was a Fairchild invention for taking flashlight pictures of moving objects that caused an officer to suggest that the young inventor be called in to survey the problem. Sherman went, he saw and he conquered and soon American shells were dropping on German ammunition dumps and gun positions which had previously looked from the air like cabbage patches.

After he had made the army camera workable, Fairchild told the Signal Corps that the device was still no good and that he could build one that would be automatic and foolproof. They gave him the green light.

Months of reasearch and \$40,000 of his father's money went into the first Fairchild aerial camera. The big problem was the creation of a between-the-lens shutter that would give an exposure of less than 150th of a second through a wide aperture.

Sherman Fairchild finally came up with the answer and built an aerial camera that would really work. It was a complete success and the army bought two of them at \$2,500 each. The war was about over, however, and the government "compromised" the bill for experimentation from \$40,000 down to \$7,000.

The young man set about manufacturing cameras and finding jobs for them to do. He created the air mapping industry and was soon surveying cities, timber lands and other areas throughout the hemisphere. For years the aerial survey company was headed by another Oneonta boy, Edward R. Polley.

The photographers needed a steady platform on which to work and Fairchild turned his attention to planes and was soon deep in their design and manufacture. He built the first true cabin plane and the first with practical folding wings. The first aircraft to fly over the South Pole was a Fairchild as were the "Flying Boxcars" of World War II. His influence on the burgeoning aircraft industry was tremendous and lasting.

And it all started with a camera which his parents had given him during his boyhood days in Oneonta. He took it apart and put it back together and his mind and heart were captured.

A darkroom in his home and a machine shop in the carriage house followed and one of the most amazing careers in the history of American industry was on its way.

## THE IRON HORSE

The men who worked so hard to bring the railroad to our valley most certainly did not envisage a day when the iron horse would no longer haul passengers and yet, ninety-seven years after the first train chugged into the Oneonta station, the event the pioneers could not foresee came to pass.

From 1830 to 1835 Oneonta's population increased by just three persons. In 1832 the Charlotte Turnpoke was chartered and by 1835 daily stagecoaches were thundering through our streets on that great thoroughfare. The turnpike caused some increase in the community's population but it was not until the advent of the railroad in 1865 that Oneonta began to boom.

In 1832 the state granted charters for three railroads in the valley. One was to go from Cooperstown to Colliers, George Clark and Peter Collier being the promoters. Another, the Otsego and Schoharie, was to run from the latter village to Unadilla. Among those interested in this venture were Collier, E. R. Ford and Jared Goodyear.

Still another road, the Utica and Susquehanna, would connect the Oneida county city with Unadilla and there meet the Otsego and Schoharie. In 1836 the Cherry Valley and Susquehanna Railroad was chartered. This was to pass down Cherry Valley Creek to Milford and thence down the Susquehanna to Binghamton, where it would make connections with the Erie.

None of these railroads got beyond the planning stage. In 1846 a meeting was held at Richmondville and from this evolved the Schenectady and Susquehanna Railroad, to run from Schenectady to Binghamton. The Mohawk valley city failed to realize the importance of the enterprise and it was decided to make Albany the eastern terminus.

The organization of the Albany and Susquehanna Railroad was perfected in 1851 and work was started. The city of Albany loaned a million dollars to the company and Binghamton gave fifty thousand. Daniel Drew, crony of Jay Gould and Jim Fisk, bought a million dollars worth of first mortgage bonds.

The line started at tidewater and had to climb to points as high as fifteen hundred feet and the construction expenses were high, the total cost being over six million dollars, a lot of money in those days. Frequently work was halted while additional funds were raised.

Legislation was passed permitting townships to purchase A.&S. stock with the proceeds from bond issues. Oneonta, with Harvey Baker, Carleton Emmons and Stephen Parish as railroad commissioners, bought seventy thousand dollars worth of stock in 1863, pledging the credit of the town in that amount.

The road was completed to Oneonta in 1865 and to Binghamton in 1869. The A.&S. paid no dividends and until 1870 the interest on the bonds was paid by tax levies. In that year the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company leased the railroad and agreed to pay seven per cent on the stock. The town then sold its stock and redeemed the bonds as they came due.

It cost the taxpayers of Oneonta about forty thousand dollars to secure the inestimable benefits of a railroad.



## OLD HOUSES AGAIN

The other afternoon we took a look at an Oneonta house which was built over a century ago and seemingly is good for many more years of use. Later we visited an outlying development where several costly homes are being erected. We couldn't help wondering whether these dwellings will be in livable shape in the year 2063.

The old house is the one at 41 Academy Street. Brown shingles now cover the white clapboards and the well is gone but otherwise the house is little changed exteriorly from the day it was built in 1854 by Moses Spencer and his son Isaac.

Moses Spencer came here in the early 1830s from the town of Maryland. He lived first in a log cabin next to where Bob's Restaurant now is, nearly opposite the Chestnut Street school. Moses' wife was Sally Shellman, born in the town of Davenport in 1812. She died in 1894. Among their nine children was Conrad (Coon) Spencer, who operated a meat market in Oneonta for years.

When this house was built, Academy (then called Milk Street) extended only to Grove (then known as Church Street), the Union School had not yet been built and the First Baptist cemetery occupied the corner where the school cafeteria now stands.

In 1853, Jacob, Jr. and Gould Dietz opened Dietz Street through their property. At that time Jacob built the house at the corner of Wall Street where is now a Bresee parking lot. It was long the residence and office of Dr. Meigs Case, a prominent Oneonta physician and the son of Dr. Samuel Case, one of the pioneer doctors of the village.

The house at 37 Dietz Street was built by Jay McDonald prior to 1866, when George Bixby bought it. A legend to the effect that it was once a tavern is without foundation.

The large house on the southwest corner of Elm and Walnut Streets was built in 1898 by Irving H. Rowe, a prominent business man and once president of the Wilber National Bank. It replaced a house built in 1874 by his father, Hervey N. Rowe.

The brick house at 31 Walnut Street, now an apartment dwelling, was built in 1867 by Jay McDonald and was later for years the residence of Henry Saunders. The next dwelling above, at 29 Walnut, was erected in 1866 by Eliakim R. Ford and was the residence of his son, Sylvester Ford, who managed his father's estate following the death of the pioneer.

Mrs. James Skinner has never lived in any other house than the one she occupies at 80 Chestnut Street. It was built about one hundred years ago by her grandfather, Philander Lane, and was subsequently occupied by her father, L. B. Lennon, a hardware dealer, and by herself and late husband, Dr. James B. Skinner, a dentist.

The house at 79 Chestnut at the corner of Watkins avenue was erected in 1871 by Henry M. Tobey. It was for years the home of his son, Albert Tobey, a prominent merchant, and then of the latter's daughter, Miss Katharine Tobey, a beloved teacher at Oneonta Normal. Following her death it was given to the Bugbee Foundation for use in connection with the college.

## PALATINE ANCESTORS

So complete was the devastation of the German Palatinate following the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-1714) that it was said that a crow flying over it would have to carry its own rations.

The entire area lying along the upper Rhine and Neckar rivers and including the provinces of Worms, Alsace, Baden and Wurtemberg, was laid in ruins, thousands perished and as many more were driven from their homes.

From this desolation came the migration to America of the Palatines, those hardy pioneers who settled the Schoharie and Mohawk valleys and who, dribbling into the vale of the Susquehanna, laid the foundations of what is now Oneonta.

VanDerwerker and Scramling, Bornt, Blend and Swart, Morenus, Yager and Wolf, Dietz and Cutshaw are but a few of the names of pioneers in this region in whose veins ran Palatine blood. For years they clung to their customs and their German tongue.

The Palatine migration started in 1708 when fifty-five persons crossed the Atlantic via London and settled near what is now Newburgh. Late the next year the largest single group of immigrants to come to the New World prior to the Revolution (about 3,000 Palatines) was settled on lands along the west bank of the Hudson near the present day Rhinebeck, Saugerties and Livingston Manor.

It was the intention of the English government to have the Palatines produce tar and other naval stores but the venture was not a success and soon the colonial rulers virtually abandoned the immigrants.

In 1712 fifty families struck north into the Schoharie Valley. Others followed and finally the tide of immigrants overflowed into the Mohawk Valley. The first groups moving into the Schoharie country were handicapped by a lack of iron tools and domestic animals and suffered greatly during the first few years.

In 1723 from fifteen to thirty-three families (the records are not in agreement) left the Schoharie Valley by way of Panther Creek, the Summit divide and the Charlotte and after a six-week boat trip down the Susquehanna, arrived in the Tulpenhocken valley in Pennsylvania where they founded the cities of York and Reading. These were the first of the so called Pennsylvania Dutch.

These Palatines put indelible marks on our maps by the place names which they left. Along the Hudson they gave us Newburgh, Rhinebeck, Rhinecliff, German-town and the Helderbergs. In Schoharie County they left Blenheim, Warnerville, Lawyersville and Breakabeen while Seward was once New Dorlach. In the Mohawk Valley there are Herkimer, Palatine Bridge, Frankfort, Minden, Oppenheim, Sprakers and Ilion (once Illion).

Any list of descendants of the Palatines must include such names as Nicholas Herkimer, Herbert Hoover, John D. Rockefeller, John Wanamaker, Walter Chrysler, Owen D. Young and Admiral Winfield Scott Schley.

It is not known exactly how many Palatines came to America but the census of 1790 lists 375,000 persons of German descent, mostly Palatines, out of a total population of about 3,000,000.

Certain it is that today many hundreds of residents of Oneonta and vicinity have members of this splendid stock among their ancestors.

## THE PONY FARM

It all began one day back in 1903 when Malcolm G. Keenan gave his three year old son Stuart a Shetland pony. One good steed led to another and soon the railroad ticket broker and insurance man was deep in the horse business. The fever spread and before long about every member of the "Walnut Street Gang" of kids either owned a pony or was riding his friends' nags whenever there was opportunity.

For "M.G." the buying, raising and selling of ponies became more of a business than a hobby. The barn behind his home at 10 Walnut Street became filled to overflowing and he and L. C. Millard, proprietor of the Central Hotel, formed a partnership and purchased the property on the Plains now owned by R. W. Groves and still called the "Pony Farm."

Shetland, Welsh and hackney stallions and brood mares were acquired and the herd of ponies grew steadily larger. Soon the Pony Farm was known far and wide and people came from long distances to buy pets for their children.

The country fairs which were so numerous during the first decades of the century offered fine opportunities for Millard & Keenan to display their wares and each summer the Pony Farm exhibit toured the circuit. The ponies would be exhibited for sale and there was always a big ring where for ten cents boys and girls could thrill to a pony ride.

A number of work horses were always in the group and they would be entered in the various classes — single, double, tandem, four-in-hand and saddle. The Pony Farm entries became legendary for the number of ribbons they won.

The ponies, which came to number about fifty, would travel from fair to fair under their own power. There would be two or three horse drawn wagons carrying the tents and other gear. When he became old enough, Stuart Keenan was the herd-master, keeping the animals together with the aid of his well trained horse. Sometimes William Lunn would ride with him. A cook and three or four other men completed the party.

The Schenevus Fair was the first one visited. After a week there, the cavalcade would move on to Margaretville, a two day trip. Next came Delhi and then a return to Oneonta for the weekend.

Norwich was visited next and then came the fair at nearby Greene. The big Central New York Fair at Oneonta was next on the schedule and the season usually closed at Binghamton. The animals and equipment were transported by rail to this exhibition because of the distance involved.

On one occasion, however, the troupe traveled fifty miles in one day. The Delhi Fair had been discontinued and the ponies were driven from Margaretville to the Pony Farm below Oneonta, the trip taking about fourteen hours. On this journey Augustus Gurney, now a retired United States Army brigadier general, accompanied Stuart.

The operation ceased and the Pony Farm was sold about 1918 but the keen interest in horses possessed by Mr. Keenan, his son Stuart, and his daughter Helen, continued for many years.



## SCHENEVUS MONSTER

When Professor Phelps fired a revolver as a signal that he should cut loose the parachute from the hot air balloon swaying above him, Ora Tipple saw that he was over Schenevus Lake. Remembering the "monster" that was supposed to lurk in the depths of that body of water, the portly editor decided to wait awhile.

The owner of the balloon, who had been making ascensions at the Schenevus Fair that summer of 1902, fired again but this time Tipple was over the swamp by the railroad tracks. Finally the terrain below looked good and he pulled the cord, swung by his hands from the trapeze bar and dropped gently to earth.

It was a dangerous stunt for an amateur but no one ever questioned the courage of the colorful owner of the Schenevus Monitor (or "Monster" as it came to be known). At another time during the Fair he went into a lion's cage. The beast took a swipe at him and clawed the toecap off a shoe. A week later the same lion killed his trainer at Cortland.

But it was not this sort of performance that gained the country editor both fame and notoriety. It was the constant drip of sarcasm and venom from his editorial pen that kept him in continual trouble and finally cost him a suspended federal jail sentence.

Ora Tipple was born in Schenevus in 1863. He attended school in that village and after a clerking stint at Westford, acquired some equipment and started a weekly newspaper, the Monitor, in Schenevus.

Drinking deep of the heady waters of journalistic independence, Tipple became the champion of the downtrodden and the implacable foe of their oppressors. His judgment was often bad and many of his blasts were of the rock salt variety with much smoke and noise but little resultant damage. Sometimes, however, he loaded a real charge into his typewriter and then there was trouble.

Edson A. Hayward and William Hilzinger, Oneonta lawyers of half a century ago, were his favorite targets. The first he characterized as "the son of a minister and the grandson of a minister, the man who can do no wrong." The other was "Weary Willie, the Knight of the Dirty Shirt".

He called them ambulance and hearse chasers and accused them of robbing widows and orphans. In discussing a suit in which one was engaged he said: "He acted like an intoxicated jockey riding a dead horse. He was as far beneath his opponent as the toenails of an ant are below the tips of a giraffe's ears."

The two attorneys lost a case in Binghamton once and according to Tipple: "On the train en route to Oneonta the two depressed and badly beaten lawyers (?) huddled together and sadly cooed to each other. They reminded one of a couple of constipated hoot owls in a last year's crow's nest, contemplating the arrival of the wintry blasts of December."

Tipple finally got too free with his language and was indicted by a federal grand jury for sending obscene matter through the mails. He evaded trial for two years by feigning illness (meanwhile editing the paper from his home).

When he was finally hauled into court he pleaded guilty and was sentenced to a year and one day in jail. The judge suspended sentence. This was just the gag that Tipple needed and henceforth he watched his step. He died in 1929.

## A GOOD YEAR

"Oneonta's growth is solid, not of the boom variety. There is no rush, no excitement, no inflation of values. No buildings are going up that are not needed; very few have been built that were not paid for with spot cash."

The editor of the *Oneonta Herald* was talking about the remarkable growth which the village was experiencing in 1887, three-quarters of a century ago. In that year the Normal School, a church and three factories were built while 164 homes were erected. Over 500 carpenters, painters and other construction artisans worked overtime in the community of less than 5,000 people.

Oneonta grew very slowly in its early years. When the railroad came in 1865, the village had only about 700 inhabitants, being exceeded in size by Cooperstown, Unadilla and Richfield Springs. There were only ten streets and most of the territory now included in the city was swampland, wood or pasture.

The railroad brought many new residents and the building of the shops in the early 1870s further accelerated the growth of the village. In the decade and a half from 1865 to 1880 there was a four fold increase in population and in the decade of the '80s Oneonta doubled in size.

The year of 1887 was a typical time of expansion. Hudson Street and Myrtle, Lawn and Hecox Avenues were opened and Franklin Street was extended to West. There was building activity on practically every one of the village thoroughfares.

The first State Normal School building was started in 1887. A great demand arose for residential lots in the vicinity and those men who had foresightedly bought land there reaped a tidy profit.

The First Presbyterian Church was built in that year, replacing the old white wooden structure with its graceful spire which had been erected in 1816. The Scatchard Knitting Mill on West Broadway and a chair factory at the foot of Rose Avenue were constructed. For a decade these two concerns furnished work for about 200 people.

Much of importance happened in that time 76 years ago. The first village sewer was laid on Ford Avenue from Main Street to the foot of the hill. Heretofore the plumbing had been of the Chic Sales type and the newfangled sewer aroused some wrath. Couldn't the village fathers think of a better way to spend the taxpayers' money?

Both gas and electricity came to Oneonta in 1887 and the first street railway company was organized. The upper reservoir was constructed that year. John L. Bowdish of Hartwick built a sash, blind and door factory on Wells Avenue (now the East End Lumber Company).

M. B. Williams introduced in the village the H. D. Thatcher Company's system of delivering milk in flint glass bottles. A weekly newspaper, the *Spy*, and a short lived daily, the *Oneonta Local*, made their appearance.

Prices were low (Willihan's Bakery was selling bread at four cents a loaf and biscuits at five cents a dozen) but so were wages. Ten cents an hour was the prevailing wage and ten hours the average work day.

## THE GERRY ESTATES

In the rolling Delaware hills six miles from Delhi is one of the few remaining baronial holdings in America — four thousand acres of woodland, lake and meadow comprising the fabulous Gerry estates.

Here, on land which has been in the family for over two hundred years, descendants of signers of the Declaration of Independence, of generals, governors and a vice-president, of land patroons and industrial emperors, spend their summers amid surroundings which beggar description.

The property is part of a grant by Queen Anne of England to Johannes Hardenburg in 1708. In 1749 a large portion of the tract was conveyed to Robert Livingston, a member of the family which was so prominent in colonial New York.

A daughter, Gertrude, married Morgan Lewis, a general in Washington's army and later governor of New York. Lewis built a mill on the property in 1797 and in 1825 erected, at the end of Lake Delaware, the first of the manor houses on the estates. This home is still in use.

The land came into possession of the Gerry family when Commodore Elbridge Gerry married, in 1867, Louisa Livingston, granddaughter of Robert. Gerry was the grandson of the famous Elbridge Gerry, who was a signer of the Declaration, governor of Massachusetts, vice-president of the United States and inventor of the re-districting system now known as gerrymandering.

Commodore Gerry was the founder of the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, chairman of the commission which substituted the electric chair for the gallows in New York state, and head of the New York Yacht Club. He spent his summers in the original manor house.

The Commodore had four children, Peter, Robert, Angelica and Mabel. Robert built in 1910 the house on his estate which he called Aknusti. Here are the famous horse breeding stables, used originally for flat racers, then for polo ponies and now for trotters. This home is now occupied by his widow, Cornelia Gerry, sister of former Governor Averill Harriman. The house was gutted by fire a few years ago but was soon rebuilt.

Peter Gerry, a United States Senator from Rhode Island, lived in the "old house" following his father's death in 1927. The present occupant is Elbridge Gerry, III, Robert's son.

Mabel Gerry married an Englishman named Drury. Angelica Gerry, who was never wed, built in 1928 the mansion called Ancrum after the Livingston ancestral home in Scotland. This show place, surrounded by magnificent formal gardens, has been closed since the death of the owner and its contents have been auctioned.

As a memorial to her mother, Louisa Gerry, and her grandfather, Robert J. Livingston, Miss Gerry built in 1922 the beautiful St. James' Episcopal chapel near the entrance to the estate area.

On the grounds thousands of game birds are reared each year and loosed into the woodlands. Lake Delaware, a charming body of water about a mile long and half a mile wide, is kept stocked with fish.

Here a way of life that is fast disappearing from the American scene is still being enjoyed, far from the public eye.



## GEORGE J. DANN

It has been said that while Dr. George J. Dann was superintendent of the Oneonta Public Schools, the matter of adopting a budget was simple. The Board president would ask, "Dr. Dann, is the budget ready?", and upon receipt of an affirmative answer, would move its adoption and a unanimous vote would be taken, all without benefit of discussion, public hearing or other time wasting procedure.

The story is doubtless not quite correct but it does point up the fact that for thirty-five years the school system was run in line with the Gospel According to George Dann. He was a good administrator who ran a taut educational ship but he was boss of the quarter-deck and his word was law.

Dr. Dann was a controversial character as a man of his temperament is apt to be. Not everyone agreed with his policies and there are some who will tell you that, although his scholarship was sound and his consecration deep, he was too conservative and that a seeming lack of vision contributed to the difficulties which school authorities have since faced.

Be that as it may, he will long be remembered as a gentleman and a scholar who left a deep imprint upon the community and whose friendship was regarded as precious by those who received it.

George J. Dann was born in Walton in 1874. He was graduated from Union College in 1896 with a four year average of 96.6 per cent, one of the highest ever recorded by that ancient institution.

He taught in Hobart, Liberty and Cobleskill and was principal at Roslyn when, in the spring of 1910, he became superintendent of the Oneonta schools following the resignation of Harry Rockwell.

With his advent there were rapid and radical changes in some phases of school administration. Discipline was tightened, which did not endear him to the students, although they were soon to learn that, although tough, he was fair.

For over a third of a century he administered the school system of Oneonta, gaining stature as an educator, an administrator and a man. During his years of service the Junior High school and the Mitchell Street and Chestnut Street schools were built.

Dr. Dann was very much a part of the life of the community. For twenty-five years he taught a Sunday School class in the First Methodist Church and was a lay reader. He served as exalted ruler of the Elks, high priest of Royal Arch Masons and president of Rotary as well as being for years chairman of the local Red Cross chapter.

He was a brilliant scholar, one of whose diversions was the reading of Latin classics in the original tongue. A thorough student of Abraham Lincoln and his times, he was widely known as a speaker on the life of the martyred president.

Dr. Dann retired in 1945 after thirty-five years as superintendent, a New York State record for tenure in that position in one school system. He died in 1954 and was buried in Glenwood Cemetery in the city to which he had made such significant contributions.

## THE TABLE ROCKS

The massive pines that once covered the hill are long gone and the second growth timber is now of fair size. The rude road once used by wood cutters and quarry workers can barely be traced and some paths are overgrown with brush. But the "Table Rocks" are there as they have been for countless ages and will be for eons to come.

These rocks, at the western extremity of the hill upon which Hartwick College is built, are the exposed backbone of the ridge, abruptly broken thousands of years ago to make way for the valley of the Otego. The Indians knew this "Place of Open Rocks" by the name of "Oneonta" and there we have the believed origin of the name of our city.

The bold ledge that overlooks much of Chestnut Street was the playground of generations of young Oneontans. Picnics were held there by the adolescents and the younger fry played many a game of "Cops and Robbers" and "Settlers and Indians" among the tumbled boulders. Boys doubtless visit the spot today but there is no longer the summer activity there once was.

The newest Hartwick dormitory stands athwart the old access route. Beyond it the ancient road through the woods can be followed through the newer trees surrounding the stumps of once mighty pines.

Some distance in, the path veers left and skirts the base of the huge rocks on its way to the old quarry where an abortive attempt was made years ago to cut stone for the sidewalks of Oneonta. At the turn a trail leads up to the crest of the formation.

The old landmarks are still there, including the "sliding rock" and the large flat "table rocks" where countless picnic lunches have been spread. The "chimneys" by which you could climb from one level to the other remain although some are clogged by fallen rock.

The initials carved in the rocks by Oneontans long since dead are still discernible. Here and there in the larger rocks can be seen circular depressions five or six inches deep, mute evidence that here about 1800 Nicholas McDonald quarried the grindstones used in local mills.

The view from the upper level is breathtaking. To the east are the valleys of the Susquehanna and the Charlotte while westward lie the Plains where the first settlements in the township were made. Whereas in the days of our youth the aspect in this direction was one of cultivated fields with only an occasional farmhouse, now hundreds of residences meet the eye.

This area was once the shore of an ancient sea and judicious use of the geologist's hammer will reveal fossil remains of the seaweed which once grew along the edge of the water. The Indians used the summit as a lookout post and arrowheads and other artifacts have been found there in the past.

Years ago a resort hotel was planned for "The Rocks" but the project was soon abandoned. Realtors at one time envisaged a housing development that would embrace the entire hill. This got as far as the laying out of streets from West through the present college area.

## THE GREAT EARTHQUAKE

As the man leaned over the billiard table at the Oneonta Club, the ball started rolling toward his cue. The floor heaved and so did his stomach.

On Broad Street a parked car jumped the curb and started down the outside stairway to the press room in the old Star building (now Bern's).

All over town dishes fell from shelves, chandeliers swayed and cracks appeared in wall paper and plaster.

Officer Fred Crouch, on point duty on Main Street, replied to a questioner: "Sure, I saw it, but what was it?"

The night was that of February 28, 1925, and "it" was the worst earthquake (even if mild) this region has experienced in historic times. There were no casualties and the property damage was negligible, but a tremendous amount of excitement was generated and the incident was a conversation piece for months.

The quake struck at exactly 9:22 (as many stopped clocks would testify) of a busy Saturday night. The stores were thronged with customers and the theatres were packed, for this was the era when the movie was the king of the entertainment world.

As hanging lights swayed, merchandise tumbled from shelves and window displays collapsed, customers and employees rushed from the stores into the snowy night. Curiously enough, the people ran across the streets and sought the protection of the walls of the buildings opposite those from which they had just fled.

The Oneonta Theatre emptied rapidly, people abandoning their rubbers and outer clothing. There was a small stampede at the Palace in which several persons were knocked down but not seriously hurt. Policemen and firemen lost no time in evacuating the Municipal Building and they helped to restore order at the Palace.

The people in the Salvation Army hall thought that their time had come, for the week before an evangelist had told them that they must expect a manifestation of supreme power, such as an earthquake, to move them from their position of sin. Most of them returned to the hall after awhile and Ensign Gates reported that there was an unusual number of conversions that night.

Captain Judge said in his sermon at the Universalist Church the next morning: "It may be that a lot of people prayed last night at the time of the quake but from looking at my congregation I would say that most of them slept that feeling off."

The tremor was felt throughout the city and the telephone office was swamped with calls. The Oneonta Herald remarked that an unidentified number of maiden ladies had retired early and had hastily looked under their beds when the shaking aroused them. Said the journal: "Some were frightened; some were thrilled."

The earthquake extended over most of the eastern United States. It wasn't much of a quake as those things go but it will have to do until a better one comes along, which we trust will be never.



## ONEONTA DAILY LOCAL

"This day marks a new event in Oneonta's history. In recognition of the demands of our business men and the frequently expressed wish of many of our citizens for a daily paper to record the occurrences of our embryo city, the Oneonta Local steps forward and makes its introductory bow to our citizens."

Thus, on May 2, 1887, was the Oneonta Daily Local introduced to the village. It was not, however, the first attempt to give daily expression to what was happening in the world and in the village.

In December of 1871 an itinerant printer named Payne issued the *Morning Call* from rooms in the Susquehanna House at the corner of Main and Chestnut. Payne stated that he had "not a dollar in money but a few types and \$50,000 worth of pluck". This proved not enough, however, and the paper practically died aborning as but two issues were printed.

The *Daily Local*, a four page sheet 10 x 13 inches in size, failed to live beyond childhood. One historian has recorded that it lasted but three months but this is incorrect since, in addition to Vol. 1, No. 1, we have a copy issued February 6, 1888, and numbered 230. We suspect that the latter may have been the last issue, for Vol. 1, No. 1 of another paper, the *Oneonta Daily News*, issued February 20, 1888, says: "The recent failure of a similar enterprise has apparently only intensified the popular demand for a daily newspaper."

The *Oneonta Daily Local* was issued from the office of the *Oneonta Press*, a weekly paper, by the Local Publishing Company, composed of J. Sherry Smith, a Press editor, and H. M. Worth, a former foreman of the *Herald*, another weekly sheet. The little paper sold for two cents a copy, 10 cents a week.

The few items of national and world news in the first issue were obviously clipped from other journals. There were a couple of columns of local news, mostly personals, and the back page carried a thrilling romance entitled "A False Cousin" or "A Wooing Which Was Not Successful".

Among the advertisers were the Wilber National Bank (with capital and surplus of \$100,000 each); the grocery firms of Morehouse & Albro, Fletcher & Murdock and Condit's; Winans, the Artistic Photographer; William McCrum & Sons, furniture, bedding and undertaking; Dr. G. W. Goldsmith, dentist; Kirkland, boots and shoes; the dry goods firms of Bradley & Hunter, Tobey & Gurneys, and B. F. Sisson (a brand new store); and M. Mandlebaum, men's clothier, offering suits at from \$2.50 to \$5.00.

The year of 1887 was truly "That Wonderful Year" for the growing village. During it 168 buildings of one sort or another were constructed, including the First Presbyterian Church, a knitting mill, a chair factory and a sash, blind and door factory.

The bill creating the State Normal School was passed in 1887 and construction started on the building. Work on the upper reservoir was begun and the first sewer was laid on Ford Avenue. Electric lights made their first appearance in Oneonta in 1887.

## A RUGGED MAN

It seems incredible that any human being could survive 999 lashes ("well put on") of the "cat" but Thomas Morenus was young and rugged and he lived through the terrible ordeal to become one of the earliest settlers in our valley.

Thomas Morenus was born of Palatine German parents in 1756, probably in the Schoharie valley. He was a Revolutionary soldier and during the late years of the conflict was a member of the Schoharie garrison. In August of 1780 he was guarding harvesters near the lower fort when he was captured by Indians, taken to Quebec and turned over to the British.

He joined a plot to blow up a magazine and escape during the confusion. The plan was discovered and he and his colleagues were sentenced to 999 lashes of a cat-o-nine-tails. All of his companions died as a result of the brutal beating but Morenus recovered and finally escaped after eighteen months of imprisonment.

In 1793 Morenus settled across the river from the future site of Oneonta on 100 acres of land which he had purchased for \$125 from Goldsborough Banyar. He made a clearing in the dense forest and erected a rude log cabin, using clay and moss to stuff the crevices. Later (probably about 1805) he built a frame cottage which is still standing and, considerably enlarged and altered, is now the home of Mrs. Frank G. Sherman.

When this pioneer first came here the valley presented a vastly different appearance than at present. Thick forests covered the hills and dales, broken only by the watercourses and by an occasional Indian trail, including the important one which was later to become Main Street.

Deer and bear abounded in the woods and at night could be heard the strange cry of the catamount. The streams were full of trout, pike and shad of great size. In season the skies were darkened by immense flights of passenger pigeons.

Morenus was not without neighbors in those last years of the eighteenth century. Peter Swart lived up the trail a piece near what is now known as Swart Hollow. Over on the river bank was Vanderwerker's grist mill while his log home stood near the lower entrance to Neahwa Park. Beyond, near the site of the Main Street viaduct, was the log tavern of Aaron Brink while far up the narrow Indian trail was the rude inn of Simeon Walling on the site of the United Presbyterian church.

Down on the Plains the Scramlings and the Youngs were carving out their farms and Joseph McDonald was running a tavern and store on the Pond Lily Hotel site. It is believed that a portion of the old structure is a part of the present building.

Thomas Morenus died in 1826 and the farm passed into the hands of his son, Jeremiah, born in 1794. "Uncle Jeremy", who fought in the War of 1812, spent his entire life on the farm, dying there in 1882. His daughter Belle married Jesse Fairchild and became the mother of George W. Fairchild, congressman and first head of IBM.

## WONDERFUL YEAR OF 1912

"Congressman George W. Fairchild was in town yesterday en route to Albany whence he will accompany the New York delegation to the national Republican convention in Chicago. When interviewed he said that he did not think that Theodore Roosevelt would bolt the party if President Taft were renominated."

Yes, Virginia, you know your history; it was indeed that wonderful year of 1912. Let's see what else was happening in Oneonta on June 15 a half century ago.

Graduation time was near and Oneonta High School and the State Normal School were making plans for the great day. A record number of students, 179, were to receive diplomas on the Hill while "thirty-four bright and promising young men and women" were to get sheepskins at OHS.

It had been announced that Lincoln Kellogg, Ruth Taber, Agnes Bailey and Douglas McCrum would give the orations at the high school ceremonies. Among the prizes to be awarded was one to Milton Henderson for the greatest improvement in penmanship.

The Otsego and Herkimer Railroad had just announced its summer schedule. Trolleys would leave for Herkimer (and for Utica by transfer at Mohawk) each hour from 7:21 a.m. to 9:21 p.m. Cars would arrive from the north each hour from 9:54 a.m. to 9:54 p.m.

At a meeting of the Common Council, draymen had protested that the space on Dietz Street near Main which had been allotted for parking their horses and wagons while awaiting business, was being usurped by automobiles. No action was taken but most of the aldermen were of the opinion that motor cars should be allowed to park on the business streets for only five minutes.

Herbert T. Jennings, who had broken the First National Bank of Oneonta the year before, had just been sentenced in a New York Federal court to six years in Atlanta prison after his conviction for embezzlement and misappropriation of the funds of a bank in Mt. Vernon.

The Oneonta Herald was moving its plant to The Star building on Broad Street from the wooden structure it had occupied just east of the Municipal Building. Its old quarters were to be razed to make room for a three story brick block to be erected by George W. Fairchild. When the Herald was demolished the famous old elm (ten feet in circumference) would have to be cut down.

A. M. Butts was advertising the largest collection of used cars in town, including these makes: Ford, Maxwell, Auto Car, Jackson, Cadillac, Elmore, Overland, Buick, National, Oldsmobile, Pope-Toledo, Pope-Hartford, Wayne, Regal and Reo.

B. F. Sisson was offering tailored suits from \$15 up while the Bell Clothing Company had white and linen wash skirts for 89 cents. Gardner and Stevens was advertising men's \$4.00 oxfords for \$2.00.

Yes, June 15, 1912 was a day like all days but filled nevertheless with events growing out of the past and having significance for the future.



## *BELoved PASTOR*

When Dr. James C. Russell died in 1933 not only did the First Presbyterian Church lose a beloved pastor but Oneonta lost what might be termed its minister-at-large, for the activities of this remarkable man were not confined to his church but covered a wide range of community activities.

His pastorate here embraced a period of thirty-four years, the longest in the history of the church. There were few residents of the community during that time who did not know him and all held him in high respect and affection.

James C. Russell was born at Danville, Pa., on July 15, 1857. He received his early education in the schools of that village and then went on to Princeton University, from which he was graduated in 1883. He obtained his training in theology at Princeton Seminary. His first pastorate following ordination was at Horseheads, N. Y., where he spent five years and where he was married to Miss Edith Sears on March 7, 1888.

He was then called to the First Presbyterian Church in Camden, N. J., where he was so popular and his work was so outstanding that when he decided to accept an offer from Oneonta the church board at first refused to accept his resignation.

Rev. J. C. Russell (the doctorate would come later) started his work in Oneonta in September of 1899. During most of his pastorate he was one of a trio of ministers whom it would be hard to match in length of service, ability and personality. The other two were Dr. Charles S. Pendleton of the Main Street Baptist Church and Dr. Edson J. Farley of the First Baptist.

During Dr. Russell's incumbency, the First Presbyterian Church grew in size, in strength and in good works. As a pulpit orator and public speaker, this dynamic person had few equals.

Dr. Russell did not confine his labors to the good of the church and its congregation. He gave freely of his time and talents whenever there was a community project which needed help.

Although he was a man of peace, James Russell early espoused the cause of the Allies in World War I, believing that their victory meant the triumph of right and justice. When the United States entered the conflict in 1917 he threw himself wholeheartedly into the fight on the civilian front. He became a Minuteman and spoke many times on behalf of War Bond drives.

When the campaign to bring Hartwick College to Oneonta started he offered his services in that cause and did very effective work. So it was with every worthwhile community project.

Dr. Russell was an early member of the Rotary Club and rarely missed a meeting. To sit at table with him and listen to his comments on men and movements was a rare experience.

He was an active member of the Masonic Lodge and was Grand Chaplain of the Grand Lodge of the State of New York during 1912-14, being appointed by Grand Master Charles Smith, his good friend and a member of his congregation.

In 1928 Dr. James C. Russell became pastor emeritus and went into semi-retirement. He died on June 7, 1933, and was buried in Glenwood Cemetery.

## FATHER OF THE NORMAL.

In one sense Willard Yager can be regarded as the father of the Oneonta State Normal School. It was he who conceived the idea of having a state institution here and he kept plugging the issue until the school was a reality.

But his fame does not rest upon this alone. His great accomplishment was the patient research which disclosed much of what we know about the Indians who lived in this valley thousands of years before the white man came.

Willard E. Yager was born in Oneonta in 1865. His parents were David Yager and Emogene Shepherd, both of pioneer families. His father, a prominent business man of his time, built the brick house at the corner of Main and Grand Streets which, enlarged and altered, was later the home of George W. Fairchild and is now the Masonic Temple.

After attending the local schools, he entered Cornell. Dissatisfied with the instruction there, he transferred to Phillips Exeter Academy in 1876 and after a year there matriculated at Harvard Law School, where he spent two years.

In 1880 he became a law clerk in Albany but evidently the vocation did not appeal to him for in 1882 he returned to Oneonta and became editor of the *Oneonta Herald*, a weekly newspaper which he and George Fairchild had acquired.

Mr. Yager's career as a journalist was eminently successful. Under his direction the *Herald* became a widely known and influential newspaper. He was the first advocate of a State Normal School for Oneonta. He kept hammering at the theme in editorials and in 1887 a bill creating the school became law.

When difficulty was experienced in finding a site, Mr. Yager, Mr. Fairchild, D. F. Wilber and George I. Wilber formed a syndicate which bought the land at the head of Maple Street and presented it to the state. He was a member of the first Board of Managers of the school.

During all of his journalistic career, Willard Yager had another consuming interest — archeology and anthropology as they applied to the Indians of this region. He started collecting Indian artifacts while a boy and as he became older his interest and his knowledge grew.

In 1887 he explored the ancient village at the mouth of the Charlotte, finding thousands of specimens which he loaned to the Normal School. This valuable collection was almost completely destroyed when the school burned in 1894.

In 1890 Mr. Yager sold his interest in the *Herald* to Mr. Fairchild and devoted the rest of his life to travel, to the collecting of artifacts and to writing. He built a fireproof structure, the Long House, at the rear of his Ford Avenue residence to house a museum of over 6,000 Indian artifacts.

During his lifetime Mr. Yager published three books relating to Indian lore and culture. Hartwick College, to which his sister, Miss Marian Yager, willed the Long House and its priceless contents, together with a sizeable endowment fund, has published two more volumes from material which he had assembled.

Willard E. Yager, whose life was as rewarding as any ever lived in Oneonta, died in 1929 and was buried beside his ancestors in Riverside Cemetery.

## CARNIVAL TIME

For over half a century (from 1874 through 1926) the third week in September was carnival time in Oneonta. The Central New York Fair was held then and the big show was a great event in the lives of thousands of people.

Let's take a single Fair day and see what happened. We will pick September 21, 1910, because on that day all attendance records were broken when 30,000 persons packed the grounds, situated where Belmont Circle and the west end of Hudson Street are now.

It had been advertised for weeks that on that day would occur the first airplane flight ever made in the valley. Few people had ever seen a heavier-than-air flying machine in action and the anticipation was great. Many had come from long distances just to see that feature of the day's program.

The flight did not materialize but there was plenty of other entertainment and probably few regretted their trip to Oneonta. The Curtiss biplane had been shipped in and assembled on an improvised airfield on the Horace Kerr farm on Southside. The day before, Joseph Seymour, the "intrepid birdman", had attempted a trial flight.

Said the Herald: "The machine went up well but when about forty feet above the ground it encountered a slack place in the air and pitched downward." The pilot was not injured but the plane was badly damaged and it was found impossible to repair it in time to make the advertised flights.

Meanwhile, back at the Fair Grounds, things were progressing. All morning people had been streaming into town. Each train on the Delaware and Hudson and Ulster and Delaware railroads and on the Oneonta and Herkimer trolley line was packed and hundreds came by horse and by the still novel motor car.

By noon the big new grandstand on the northern slope was crammed and people were packed on the area inside the half mile track. Activities started at one when Rev. C. M. Jones married Henry Stone of Edmeston and Carrie Abbott of Sherburne in a ceremony on the roof garden in front of the grandstand.

At 1:30 came the Floral Parade with Squire Gardner as marshal and the Electric City Band of Schenectady leading a procession of flower decorated floats, saddle horses, single and double carriages, automobiles and bicycles.

Among the lady riders the winners were May McKee, Margaret Thayer and Edith Bates while Millard and Keenan's Pony Farm and Lynn Sickler took the ribbons in the men's class. The single horse rigs of Jennie Parish, Mrs. Martha Howe and Daniel Trinkino were winners while in the two horse group the prizes went to Carrie Johnson and Ethel Blend.

The roof garden attractions included the usual jugglers, head balancers and "death defying" bicyclists. Between the acts were the heats of the trotting and pacing races. Top honors that day went to O. D. Westcott's trotter "Star Wilkes" and the Seymour Camp pacer "Direct Adair".

For years the Charles K. Champlin repertory company played Oneonta during Fair week. Among its offerings in 1910 were "Walls of Jericho", "Shore Acres", "The Reformer" and "Arizona Limited".



## IN LINE OF DUTY

Franklin Yates knew that this time he could not escape the consequences of his misdeeds, for he had just added murder to the charges of rape and arson which were pending against him.

As he peered out of an attic window of his home near Morris that morning in April of 1923, he could see that dozens of men were drawing a cordon around the house. Many were state policemen, for the victim was their comrade, Corporal Harold Mattice, the first trooper in the state killed in line of duty. Others were farmers and townspeople and nearly everyone carried a rifle or shotgun.

Yates' family was one of the most respected in the Butternut valley. He was a direct descendant of Dr. William Yates, who introduced vaccination in the United States. His mother was a Duroe, another old and respected family, while his estranged wife was the widow of Lynn B. Kenyon, a prominent and wealthy Morris resident.

His good education included courses at Oneonta Normal School. He tried teaching but could not keep a job and finally lost his state license because of immoral conduct. He then taught in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands before returning to live with his mother at the Yates homestead on the back road to Garrattsville.

During the winter preceding the murder he had been indicted for rape, the young girl involved being his own niece. He was released on bail pending trial. The girl's father had preferred the charge and Yates had threatened revenge.

During the early morning of April 28, 1923, an attempt was made to burn the father's barn, situated across the creek from the Yates farm. The state police were notified and Corporal Mattice and Trooper A. E. Young were sent to investigate. They picked up Deputy Sheriff Wolverton in Morris village.

The troopers found footprints in the wet ground back of the barn. The trail led across a meadow, over the creek and directly to Yates' back door.

The mother answered the men's knock and said that her son was upstairs and would be down soon. They waited for some minutes and then went up after him. He was not on the second floor and they climbed to the attic.

Mattice glimpsed Yates hiding behind a beam at the rear of the garret and called upon him to come out. The answer was a shotgun blast which caught the trooper full in the left chest, killing him instantly. A second shot narrowly missed the other two officers as they dived for the stairway.

Help was summoned and the siege began. Every endeavor to entice Yates into the open failed and burning the house was being debated when blood was discovered seeping through the ceiling in a second floor room. A hole was cut in the plaster and a man's head, covered with blood, was disclosed.

Captain Daniel Fox led his men into the attic and Yates' body was found, a hole in his temple and a rifle clutched in his hand. Knowing that the situation was hopeless, the degenerate had taken his own life.

It was evident that Yates had planned to kill the three officers and then escape. In a bedroom was a packed bag together with a good sized sum of money. When the second shot missed, the desperate plan failed.

## JOSEPH S. LUNN

It was no novice in municipal government who took office on January 1, 1914, as the third mayor of the city of Oneonta. Joseph S. Lunn had been a trustee of the village for six years and had served two terms as president, during which many important events took place in the community.

This good man had only three more years to live but they would stamp him as one of the most efficient, best liked and most respected men who ever administered the affairs of our city government.

Joseph Seth Lunn was born in the town of New Lisbon on October 27, 1868, the eldest of three sons of William and Carrie (Gregory) Lunn. On the paternal side his grandparents had emigrated from Scotland while his mother's people, the Gregorys, were among the first settlers in that part of the county, coming from Connecticut in 1776.

In 1889, at the age of twenty-one, Joseph Lunn came to Oneonta. He found employment in the hop office of Luzerne Westcott, whose daughter Minnie he was to marry in 1892. Mr. Westcott was also in the ice business with Eugene Rose and soon his son-in-law acquired the Rose interest and became a partner.

It was not long before Mr. Lunn was the principal owner of the business, which he conducted successfully until his death. He also had extensive real estate interests and conducted the Hillcrest farm on Cemetery Road about two miles from Oneonta.

He was keenly interested in the government of his adopted community and about 1901 became a village trustee, serving in that capacity for six years. He was president of the board for four years during which time the viaduct was completed, the first brick pavement was laid on Main, Chestnut, Broad and Dietz Streets and the present Municipal Building was authorized following the fire of May, 1906, during which the old wooden village hall and fire station was leveled to stop the spread of the flames.

Oneonta became a city on January 1, 1909, and Mayor Albert Morris appointed Mr. Lunn to the first Board of Public Works. He was chairman of that body for two years.

In the election of 1913 Joseph Lunn, a Republican, was elected mayor over Fred N. Clark, the Democratic nominee, and Hiram W. Sheldon, who was the candidate of the Progressive party.

He was nominated again in 1915 and this time defeated Democrat George Gibbs and Homer D. Alden, running on the Progressive and Prohibition tickets.

He was destined not to finish this term. On May 5, 1917, he died at the age of 48. Thus was finished a career of much usefulness to the community and of great promise for the future.

Joseph S. Lunn was an active member of the First Baptist Church and was on the building committee when the present church structure was erected. He was a director of the Chamber of Commerce and a member of the Oneonta Club, the Oneonta Automobile Club and the Masonic Lodge and Chapter.

William H. Lunn, president of the Oneonta Oil and Fuel Company, is a son and Mrs. LeRoy S. House a daughter of this eminent citizen.

## THE GALLANT 76TH

War seemed not too real to the 38 young men who left Oneonta on November 24, 1861, bound for the barracks at Cherry Valley of the infantry regiment being recruited in the county. Despite the Union disaster at Bull Run they felt that the rebels would be beaten easily and that their service would be short.

Some of these men would never see home again and it would be three years before others would return to the Otsego hills. The regiment they were to join would become the famous New York 76th, an outfit which participated in most of the great battles of the conflict and whose losses were staggering.

At the outbreak of the war the 39th Regiment, New York National Guards, of which Oneonta's militia unit was a part, was headquartered at Cherry Valley. In September the regiment offered its service to the federal government. Six companies totaling 500 men had been organized when the incomplete regiment was ordered to Albany where the companies were transferred to other regiments.

Two units went to the 3rd Artillery while Companies H, I and K were assigned to the 76th, composed mostly of men from Cortland County. Company K was recruited in Oneonta and Otego. Its first lieutenant was Charles M. Watkins, a well known Oneonta inn keeper.

The regiment trained on Riker's Island off New York and in January, 1862, was ordered south. The outfit was blooded in the fierce battle at Gainesville where ten men were killed, 72 wounded and 18 were missing. South Mountain was its next engagement and its losses here were even heavier.

The 76th was in the thick of the fight at Second Manassas and was on the bloody field of Antietam. Here it did not engage in infantry action but suffered some losses from artillery fire. Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville were next and then came Gettysburg, where the regiment was cut to ribbons.

The battle began at 8 a.m. on July 1, 1863, when two Confederate brigades engaged Buford's Union cavalry at Willoughby Run on the outskirts of the Pennsylvania village. Dismounted and fighting as infantrymen with their new Spencer repeating carbines, Buford's men held their ground against the repeated attacks of superior numbers of grey clad troops.

At 10 o'clock help came when the troops from General John Reynolds' First Infantry Corps began streaming over Seminary Ridge from the south. The 76th was in this group and went into action immediately with 27 officers and 348 men. In the first half hour it lost 18 officers and 151 men, or nearly half of its effectives.

On the second day the 76th helped defend the right flank and on the third day was in the line on Cemetery Ridge when Pickett made his futile charge. The regiment's total casualties at Gettysburg were 234.

Then came the Wilderness and the 76th again suffered heavily. The regiment was at Spottsylvania, Cold Harbor and before Petersburg. The three year enlistment of the men expired on December 31, 1864, but 165 reenlisted.

The 76th New York Volunteer Infantry entered service with 1,000 men. Total casualties were 915, including 175 known dead, 399 wounded and 341 missing in action, most of them in the Wilderness. Some of these were captured but most of them died in the flaming underbrush.



## AS IT WAS IN 1915

Let's plunge a hand into the bowl where the used up years are kept, pull one out at random and see what was happening in Oneonta around its beginning. Here it comes and it's That Wonderful Year of 1915, one of the better ones. War was abroad in the world but it had not yet touched our shores and things were progressing quite normally in our pleasant community.

It was very cold during the holidays, with the mercury plunging to twenty-five below zero on the day after Christmas. Then came a period of thaw followed by another cold snap, which left the sidewalks and streets in bad shape.

Despite the stormy weather there was a great deal of social activity in the city. Sherman M. Fairchild gave a reception at the home of his parents, Congressman and Mrs. George W. Fairchild, for West Point Cadet Augustus M. Gurney with dancing in the ballroom on the third floor of the big brick mansion (now the Masonic Temple).

The college set had another dancing party when Arthur and Edward Polley entertained in the Woman's Club rooms in the Oneonta Theatre building. The older folks had two big parties. Mr. and Mrs. George B. Baird gave a dance in the ballroom over their garage (present site of Loblaws) and Mr. and Mrs. Arthur E. Ford and Mr. and Mrs. Harold R. Ford received in the ballroom of the Hotel Oneonta. Wolcott's orchestra played at all of these events.

Mayor Joseph S. Lunn had just announced his appointments, among them Sheldon H. Close, city clerk; Owen C. Becker, city attorney; Morris Ackley, commissioner of charities; and Thomas J. O'Brien, sealer of weights and measures.

Gardner's Philharmonic Orchestra held its premier concert in the Oneonta Theatre with Robert Gardner directing and DeForest Ingerham the concert master. Every seat, including those in the second balcony, was filled.

Fox Hospital was crowded during December, according to the report of Superintendent Eva Caddy. There were forty-eight admissions during the month and an average daily population of twenty-one.

The Fortnightly Club held its first meeting of the new year at the home of A. Stanley Morris with Andrew B. Saxton, editor of the Oneonta Herald, reading a paper on "Cooperation and the Modern State". This discussion group of business and professional men was prominent in the cultural life of the community for many years.

A unique entertainment held during the week was a Victrola concert at the YMCA. A good sized crowd paid ten cents a head to hear records by such greats as John McCormick, Mischa Elman and Sousa's Band.

A bobsled accident on the long slope of Clinton Street put Dillard Van Fleet in the hospital and caused minor injuries to Alfred Stringham, Albert Fibiger, Charles Cantner, Howard Decker, Harold Lathrop and Stanley DeLaMater.

During the first week in January the trains and trolleys were crowded with students, returning from their homes in Oneonta to their schools and colleges and coming into the city to resume their work at the State Normal School. The holidays were over and Oneonta was returning to the even tenor of its ways.

## HE CORNERED GOLD

September 20, 1869, will ever be known on the New York Stock Exchange as "Black Friday", the day John Gould cornered the gold market. When that bleak time was over, thousands were ruined and scores were dead by their own hands.

But Jay Gould, one of Delaware County's most famous, if not most illustrious, sons, was not among those whose fortunes had disappeared. Several million dollars richer, he was back in the middle of his web, spinning more strands to enmesh unwary investors.

Jason Gould (as he was christened) was born in 1836 on a farm near Roxbury, the son of John Gould and Mary More, the latter a descendant of the first settler in the township. His boyhood was spent in hard work and bitter poverty.

His schooling was meagre but by dint of hard work he learned the rudiments of surveying, which he put to use by making a map of Delaware County. He supplemented this with an excellently written history of the region.

Subsequently he went into the tanning business in Pennsylvania with Zadoc Pratt (for whom Prattsville was named). After taking over his partner's investment, Gould set himself up as a leather merchant in New York. He was soon busy buying railroad stocks and bonds.

With the panic of 1857 over and the coming of the Civil War era with its opportunities for stupendous "investment", Gould manipulated his holdings until they were worth millions. His career of financial piracy was on its way.

The Erie Railroad, long the target of dishonest legislators and financiers, swam next into Gould's ken. In his titanic and scandalous battle, starting in 1867, with Cornelius Vanderbilt for control of the line, Gould allied himself with two of the most flamboyant of the robber barons, Daniel Drew and James Fiske.

Drew was a former drover and tavern keeper who became owner of a line of Hudson River steamboats, and then a Wall Street banker and broker. Few men have matched his hypocrisy. He never missed a church service on Sunday and he never missed a weekday opportunity to cheat his fellows. Jubilee Jim Fiske was a rake and libertine but a man of sure instincts where money was concerned.

In their fight for Erie control, Gould supplied the strategic imagination, Drew the low cunning and Fiske the impudence. They bribed judges and legislators, printed worthless stock certificates on their private press and when warrants were issued for their arrest, moved the Erie offices to New Jersey.

The trio was more than a match for Vanderbilt, who was himself somewhat less than a paragon of virtue. They took him for about seven million dollars. Gould is estimated to have made twelve million out of his Erie manipulations.

It was with these stolen millions that Gould cornered the gold supply. He was concerned with many other financial adventures, including an unsuccessful fight for control of the Albany and Susquehanna Railroad (now the D.&H.).

Jay Gould was reviled by press and public as few Americans have been but the cold truth is that his transgressions varied only in degree, not in kind, from those of such men as Vanderbilt and Astor.

He died in 1892, leaving a vast fortune. His descendants still own considerable land in Delaware County and their benefactions have been many.

## CENTURY AND A HALF AGO

John Fritts could not have picked a better place for his tavern than near the corner of Main and Chestnut Streets. Almost all traffic to and from the McDonald mills and up and down the river had to pass it.

Furthermore, since the south side of Main Street was practically unbuilt upon, there was an unobstructed view of the far reaching southern range of hills. Sometimes, during periods of high water, the lowlands in the valley were converted into a vast expanse of water which at times lapped the foot of the bluff upon whose crest ran the thoroughfare.

It was in 1811 that Fritts purchased the land from James Young and started to build the inn a short distance below Chestnut. The corner itself was occupied by a small structure housing the first store in the hamlet, started about 1800 by Peter Dininny, who was succeeded by the firm of Davis and Stiles.

Fritts ran the inn but a short time and was succeeded by Captain William Horton and he by James Angell. William Angell bought the property in 1820 and it was conducted as the Oneonta House for many years by him and by John M. Watkins. Enlarged through the years, it eventually occupied most of the land where the present Stanton Opera House block stands.

Let's take a look at the community as it was in 1813, just one hundred and fifty years ago. There were only about a dozen houses in the settlement. Some were of logs and others of frame construction but none was painted. The hamlet was then called McDonald's Mills. It would not be known as Milfordville until the post office came in 1817 nor as Oneonta until the township was formed in 1830.

Coming into town over the crude river bridge, the first house on the left was the McDonald tavern on the corner of River. Next was a log house about where the tracks are now and then the home of Dr. Joseph Lindsay on the corner of Grove. Next were the new Fritts' tavern and the small store on the corner.

On the opposite corner of Chestnut was the low frame house of Peter Schoolcraft on the site of a log cabin built before 1780. Then came the store and the home of Jacob Dietz where stands Bresee's.

The next building was the Frederick Brown house on the Wilber Bank site. There were no other buildings until the Oneonta Creek was crossed, when one came to the Quackenbush log house and then the Walling tavern on the United Presbyterian church site.

Crossing to the south side of the trail and going west, the first structure was the Abraham Houghtaling log house near the west bank of the creek. Then came a small dwelling on the corner of what is now Broad Street and near it the first school-house.

Next came the new ashery of Jacob Dietz under the bank opposite his home, then the Swart distillery at the foot of Grove, a couple of rude houses near the foot of Barn Hill and then the McDonald grist and sawmills, carding mill and store.

Up Chestnut was the Fritts' tannery where the Windsor Hotel stood later, a small house on the Huntington Library site and another dwelling on the westerly edge of the Loblaw lot. There were but two structures on the other side of the road, both of them small log houses about opposite the present Victory store.



## MEDICINES OF OLD

"Dr. King's New Discovery is the only Sure Cure for Consumption on earth." As we read this advertisement in a 1902 copy of the *Oneonta Herald* we thought back to the days when the papers were full of appeals to buy this or that nostrum and when you could find in any drugstore remedies guaranteed to cure any disease from catarrh to cancer, from tapeworm to tuberculosis.

Compared with those who operated before the days of the Pure Food and Drug Act, TV medicinemen are pikers. Anything went in the good old days. Spring water labeled "California Waters of Life" was warranted to cure cancer in any form. Cheap whiskey would wipe out consumption, diabetes or paralysis if the label read "Peruna" or "Hostetter's Bitters".

We riffled through papers published more than sixty years ago and found advertisements for all of the old remedies: Peruna, Father John's Medicine and Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery; Swamproot, Lydia Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People.

The use of testimonials was widespread. A little cash would induce a person to testify that he had one foot in the grave when he started taking the medicine and that one bottle made him a well man. In some cases the testimonials were printed long after the poor fellow had both feet, plus head and shoulders, six feet under.

Many of these remedies contained a big proportion of alcohol. After a few doses the patient felt good; after a bottle or two he felt very, very good. Cough medicines contained quantities of laudanum or morphine. They killed the cough and sometimes the cougher.

Medicine shows blanketed the country. A small troupe would pitch its tent on a vacant lot (we recall many on the Dietz Street area where Huntington Park now is). There would be a vaudeville act and then the pitchman would produce a bottle, extol its contents and go into his sales spiel.

In 1905 Samuel Hopkins Adams wrote a series of articles for *Colliers Weekly* which tore the hide off the proprietary medicine business and led directly to the passage of the federal Pure Food and Drug Act the next year.

His attack was devastating. He proved that more alcohol (barring beer and ale) was consumed in patent medicines than in saloons. He gave a home formula for the immensely popular Peruna (for lung diseases): Mix half a pint of alcohol with one and one half pints of water, add cubebs for flavor and a little burnt sugar for color.

He said that the only virtue of Lydia Pinkham's was that it provided ladies with a genteel way of getting tipsy. He chased down "eminent divines" who had endorsed Duff's Pure Malt and found them to be bartenders.

Adams ripped savagely into Swamproot, a specific for kidney disorders which had made millions for the Binghamton Kilmers, enabling them to found the Binghamton Press and to breed such racehorses as Exterminator.

The Drug Act ended the macabre dance for the patent medicine makers but turn on your TV set any night and you will find that the melody lingers on, faint but distinguishable.

## DRAFT DODGERS

Mr. Smith Brown, a resident of Oneonta in 1892, was a man with a grievance. Every time he saw the bronze GAR emblem in a man's lapel he was reminded of the gypping he took during the Civil War and the memory rankled.

His name had been drawn in the 1863 draft and it had cost him \$300 to escape service and to return to his lucrative job and to the girl he didn't want to leave behind him. But what hurt most was that in subsequent levies the town, not the man who was drafted, had paid the bounty. However, a recently passed law had opened the way for him to get his money back with interest.

The episode concerning Smith Brown and thousands of others like him in the state is a most interesting byplay of the stupendous drama being enacted just a century ago.

By 1863 it became clear that the volunteer system could not supply enough men for the Union armies and a draft was reluctantly ordered. Under the law a man whose name was drawn had three options. He could enter service, furnish a substitute or pay \$300 and get completely off the hook.

The system was not satisfactory and in subsequent draft calls a different method was used. The man whose name came up no longer had to pay the commutation fee. The town in which the unwilling draftee resided undertook to find a substitute and pay his price for going.

For instance, in 1864 Supervisor John Cope and Harvey Baker contracted with Mark Stevens of Sloansville to fill the Oneonta town quota and paid him \$17,976.15 to that end. It is not clear where Stevens found the men to fill the quota but find them he evidently did. .

To the Smith Browns it seemed unjust that it had cost them \$300 to save their necks while subsequent draft dodgers paid nothing for their lack of patriotism. In 1892 a state law was passed allowing towns to refund the \$300 plus thirty years interest, provided a petition was presented to the supervisor bearing names representing more than half of the taxable property in the town.

Just how this curious piece of legislation got by the Grand Army of the Republic, then a potent political force, is somewhat of a mystery. Only twenty-seven men in the town of Oneonta had paid the commutation fee and not all of them were alive in 1892 but the law made their legal heirs eligible for payment.

Petitions were circulated in Oneonta but few signatures were secured and the village's Smith Browns never received their refund. The movement was successful in many towns and cities in the state but in Otsego county only the town of Westford paid men for war service never rendered.

The petitions started a flood of letters to the editor and for weeks the matter was discussed pro and con in the newspapers. The draftees complained that they had "poured out their money" and regarded payment as a matter of honor. The opposition called attention to the fact that many Oneontans had made their contribution, not in money, but in blood.

Ironically the letters in the Oneonta Herald were in the next column to a series of stories concerning the twenty-seven Oneontans who had given their lives in the conflict.

## THE FABULOUS CLARKS

It was a great day for Cooperstown when Isaac Singer sought the help of the New York law firm of Jordan and Clark back in 1848, for it was that visit which started Edward Clark on his way to amassing a huge fortune.

The fact that it was the home of James Fenimore Cooper and Justice Samuel Nelson, of Abner Doubleday, Elihu Phinney and Erastus Beadle, not to mention the beauty of Otsego Lake, would inevitably have given the village a degree of fame but it is doubtful if it would have achieved world renown had it not been for the interest and the money of the fabulous Clarks.

Ambrose Jordan, a noted lawyer, practiced in Cooperstown from 1813 to 1820, when he returned to his home in Hudson. In 1830 he employed as a law clerk, Edward Clark, a young Williams College graduate. Five years later Clark married Jordan's daughter Caroline, who had been born in Cooperstown.

In 1837 the legal firm of Jordan and Clark was formed. By 1848, when Singer became a client, the firm had moved to New York. Singer, an erratic inventive genius with little flair for business, first sought aid in clearing title to a wood carving machine which he had invented.

Singer had also devised a sewing machine which was not profitable. Clark helped him with his problems and soon became half owner of the firm of I. M. Singer and Company. The business was carried on with great success until 1863 when Singer died. It was then reorganized with Clark as president. Meanwhile the Clark wealth kept mounting.

In 1854 Edward Clark bought the Cooperstown estate of "Apple Hill", where Justice Nelson and John A. Dix, later to be governor of New York State, had once lived. Soon after the Civil War he built "Fernleigh", the magnificent stone house which was for years the Clark summer home.

Clark's interest in Cooperstown grew apace. He added to his holdings until he owned thousands of acres, including most of the land on both sides of the lake. When Edward Clark died in 1882 his only surviving son, Alfred Corning Clark, became proprietor. He was a scholar and a patron of the arts and sciences. Upon his death in 1896 his widow, who was Elizabeth Scriven, became administratrix of the estate and arbiter of the village social life.

One of her sons, Edward Severin Clark, the crippled "squire", made great contributions to Cooperstown. He built the Otesaga Hotel and the Alfred Corning Clark gymnasium in memory of his father. The Mary Imogene Bassett Hospital was another of his benefactions.

Edward Severin Clark built Fenimore House on the site of James Fenimore Cooper's home, and the stone "cow palace" across the road. He was never married and upon his death in 1933 his brother Stephen took over.

Stephen C. Clark was as public spirited as his brother. He eventually gave Fenimore House to the New York State Historical Association for an administrative center and museum. The barns now house the Farmers Museum. He and his brother, F. Ambrose Clark, added to the Bassett endowment.

Other Clark contributions were the Village Club and Library, the Cooper Grounds and Kingfisher Tower, a landmark on the shore of Otsego Lake.



## CHESTNUT AND CHURCH

Let's go back a hundred years and take a look at the territory around the corner of Chestnut and Church Streets in Civil War times.

Where the Loblaw store is stood the Collis P. Huntington homestead. This was a square, story and a half house with a hip roof projecting over a wide porch and supported by large fluted pillars. It was built about 1840. A cut stone wall, three feet high at the corner and running to a point at the ends, extended along the street sides of the property.

After the future railroad builder went to California in '49, his mother and sisters continued to live there. It was assumed that Huntington, when he had accumulated enough of this world's goods, would return to Oneonta and here live out his days but manifold interests and a huge fortune changed that. He visited the village frequently, however, and it was always close to his heart.

In 1879 there was a plan to bring the county court house from Cooperstown to Oneonta. The extensive Huntington plot, which stretched back to High Street, was to be the site. The scheme died aborning, however.

In 1890 Gorge B. Baird purchased the property, razed the house and built a fine brick home. This became the Physicians Building in 1939 and was bought by Loblaw a few years ago.

On the other corner of Church (then called Center), where the Methodist Church is now, was the garden of Robert Hopkins, who lived on the site of the present parsonage. He was a cabinet maker whose shop stood on the Windsor Hotel site. Solon Huntington, brother of Collis and father of Henry E., lived where the Huntington Library now is.

The Methodist Church at that time was a wooden structure standing back on the hill about where the entrance to Huntington Park now is.

Church Street went only a little way beyond the present Lawn Avenue. There was a high board fence at the head of the street with a small barn on the other side. Beyond the fence the Huntington farm stretched to the hills. High Street extended only halfway through to West.

About where Franklin Street is now was the old circus ground where many of the old time traveling shows played to large crowds. Barnum's big show appeared there, with the great man selling souvenir books on the grounds.

Over on the bluff where are now Lawn Avenue and Hill Place, was the farm pasture lot. This was a fine place for sports, especially kite flying. In 1870 Rev. J. L. Wells, Methodist presiding elder, built on this pasture a house which has an interesting history. S. R. Barnes meant to build a house at Colliers since it appeared that the D.&H. shops would be located there. When it was decided to build the shops here, the building materials, including the foundation stones, were shipped to Oneonta and went into the Wells' structure.

With the fine view that its position on the edge of the bluff gave it and with its wide lawn reaching to Church Street, the house was a show place. It is still standing, the last house on the right side of Lawn Avenue.

## YELLOW BACKED BEADLES

"Bang! Bang! Bang! Three shots rang out on the midnight air and three more redskins bit the dust."

That was the traditional way of opening the dime novels which attained such enormous popularity in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Not that the words were always the same, but the general idea was there.

The story of the dime novel is fascinating in its own right but what makes it particularly interesting hereabouts is that the man who gave the literary form to the country was born in Pierstown and died in Cooperstown and the most famous author of the tales made his entrance and exit in Stamford.

Erastus Beadle was the father of the cheap paper bound book and Edward Zane Carroll Judson was the prolific writer who, under the name of Ned Buntline, wrote hundreds of the gory novels. In another sketch we told the story of this "Great Rascal" (as his biographer dubbed him), who turned William F. Cody into Buffalo Bill and gave him literary immortality.

Erastus F. Beadle was born in 1821 just over the hill from the county seat. While a youth he was apprenticed to Elihu Phinney of Cooperstown and learned his trade in that famous printshop. In the 1840s he moved to Buffalo, opened a plant and began to publish magazines.

His brother Irwin had made a success of selling songs and ballads printed on single sheets and the latter persuaded Erastus to publish a number of these songs in a pamphlet called "The Dime Song Book". It sold like hot cakes and gave Erastus the idea of publishing other cheap books.

He went to New York and with a former Buffalo associate, Robert Adams, started the firm of Beadle and Adams. They published song and joke books, handbooks on sports and a series of biographies, all selling for ten cents.

In 1860 the firm launched the dime novel with a thriller called: "Maleska: the Indian Wife of the White Hunter". This was followed by a series of adventure tales, all of them thin little books with covers of saffron paper, hence the "yellow backed Beadle".

The Civil War was a godsend for Beadle. His books went by the millions to the men in the field. They were baled like firewood and shipped to the camp sutlers, who sold them to the soldiers. Many were the bloodstained copies found on battlefields and many a man was buried with a Beadle in his pocket.

After the war the publishing pace increased and other firms got into the game. Soon the market was flooded with paper bound books selling at five, ten and fifteen cents. Ned Buntline wrote hundreds of the stories. His favorite trick was to sign an exclusive contract with a firm like Beadle and then write for several other publishers under different names.

Although the man in the white hat always won and virtue was ever triumphant, most parents disapproved of the shockers and Johnny had to read them behind his geography book or out in the barn.

Erastus Beadle made his fortune and retired in 1889, returning to Cooperstown where he purchased a fine home, "Glimmerview", and spent the rest of his days. He died there in 1894.

## JACK THE RIPPER

Certainly William (Jack) Scanlin was not the most reputable citizen of the Oneonta of the 1890s. He was a good worker but he liked to look upon the wine when it was red and hence knew his way around the village jail. When he was sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of his wife, few were surprised.

But Scanlin must have had something on the ball for in 1911, after he had been in Auburn Prison for 17 years, he was paroled through the good offices of some of the most prominent men in Oneonta.

Who were these men who intervened on behalf of a penniless and almost forgotten man who had committed a brutal crime many years before? What were their accomplishments then and in later life?

The leader of the group was George B. Baird, a wealthy citizen whose mansion occupied the site of the Loblaw supermarket. The others were George W. Fairchild, publisher, congressman and founder of IBM; Charles Smith, bank president, industrialist, assemblyman and Grand Master of Masons in the State of New York; E. Reed Ford, son of the pioneer, E. R. Ford, and a prominent citizen in his own right; and George I. Wilber, banker, railroad magnate and IBM director.

These men traveled the countryside with a petition urging clemency for Scanlin. They secured the signatures of all the surviving trial jurors, of the presiding judge and of hundreds of citizens. Finally they appeared in person before Governor Charles E. Hughes and presented the petition and their argument.

Jack Scanlin was born in Oneonta, his father being a respected citizen who had plied the cooper's trade for many years. In 1892, when the murder occurred, he was 37 years old and was employed by Mr. Ford, a local druggist.

Scanlin was an honest, industrious man who was entirely trustworthy when not in his cups. He lived in a rooming house at the base of Barn Hill near the old grist mill. This dilapidated structure was the oldest house in the village, having been built by Nicholas McDonald nearly a century before.

Scanlin was estranged from his wife, Minnie, but she and their three year old daughter occupied a room in the same house. Another roomer was an itinerant hop picker, William Jameson, of whom the husband was insanely jealous. When Mrs. Scanlin and Jameson returned together from hop picking during the evening of September 27, 1893, Scanlin felt that his suspicions were confirmed.

Visiting saloon after saloon, the man soon became violently drunk. Early the next morning he entered the house, knocked down the landlady when she tried to stop him, forced his way into his wife's room and fatally slashed her with a razor.

He was soon arrested by Officers Dibble and Hall and in due course of time was indicted by the grand jury for the crime and convicted of second degree murder. He was sentenced to life imprisonment by the presiding justice, Walter Lloyd Smith.

Following Scanlin's release from prison, Mr. Baird found employment for him in Auburn and he spent the remainder of his life in that city.

Thus ends the intriguing story of the mighty interest of some of those in high places for a fellow human whose feet had trod such different paths.



## WHO IS COOPER?

When Edward Everett Hale entered a Cooperstown bookstore in 1844 and asked for a copy of James Fenimore Cooper's "The Pioneers", the merchant replied: "I never heard of the book and who might James Fenimore Cooper be?"

It seems incredible that such an incident could occur in the village which owed its existence to the Cooper family and of which the noted novelist was the most prominent citizen. However, at the time of the episode, James Fenimore Cooper, America's first writer of international fame, was one of the most cordially detested men in New York state with hardly a friend even in his home town.

It all started with the controversy over Three Mile Point, a wooded promontory up the lake which, although owned by the Coopers, had been a recreation spot for generations of villagers. Annoyed by an act of minor vandalism, J. Fenimore announced that henceforth the spot would be off bounds for all unless special permission was obtained from him.

Cooper's unpopularity started some years ago before when he returned to the village after several years' absence in Europe, enlarged Cooper Hall and settled down there.

The novelist was a confirmed democrat insofar as processes of government were concerned but he was an aristocrat by nature and the uncouth manners of many of the people of the period annoyed him greatly. He had his coterie of friends but it would appear that he snubbed most of the townspeople, which added not a whit to his popularity.

The Three Mile Point matter exploded into a furor which lasted for years and which involved Cooper in a long series of libel suits against many of the most prominent newspapers in the state. A mass meeting was held at which resolutions were passed condemning Cooper in bitter language, stating that his edict in regard to the use of the Point would be utterly disregarded and asking for the removal of the writer's books from the public library.

Newspapers far and wide took up cudgels for the embattled residents of Cooperstown and berated the author soundly in articles and editorials. In 1838 the Otsego Journal, a local paper, reprinted a story from the Norwich Telegraph derogatory to Cooper and added some tart comments of its own.

Cooper sued the Journal for libel and secured a judgment for \$400. He then went after the Telegraph and collected. When other papers came to the editorial aid of their colleagues, he started a series of suits which lasted for six years.

Among the papers which Cooper haled into court were the Oneida Whig, published at Utica; the New York Courier and Enquirer, Evening Signal and Commercial Advertiser; the New York Tribune, edited by Horace Greeley; and Thurlow Weed's Albany Evening Journal.

Cooper acted as his own attorney, arguing all of the cases in court. The juries were reluctant but J. Fenimore won practically every case. As a matter of fact, the present libel laws of New York state were based to a great degree upon the decisions in these cases.

## LAW OF THE VILLAGE

Solon Huntington was Oneonta's first poundmaster. This might seem like a menial job for a man who was a foremost citizen in his own right and whose brother Collis and son Henry were to become two of the wealthiest men in the United States.

But in 1848 when Oneonta became a village the job of poundmaster was an important one. Nearly every family kept animals, whether horses, cattle, pigs or poultry and their wanderings had to be strictly curtailed for obvious reasons.

Ordinance No. 6 of the new village provided that animals found roaming at large should be put in the pound and released only by the payment by the owner of \$1, a considerable amount of money in those days. The pound was located in the area back of the Windsor Hotel site.

The original village code of 11 ordinances comprised about 1,000 words, a far cry from the hundreds of thousands of words in the countless ordinances and local laws which have been enacted, revised, repealed and reenacted during the past 113 years. Today there are 78 effective city ordinances.

The code of local laws was adopted on February 2, 1849, at a meeting held in the office of the first village clerk, William H. Olin. Present were the five trustees: Eliakim R. Ford (president), Hezekiah Watkins, William Bronson, William S. Fritts and Samuel J. Cook.

The word "fine" seems to have been taboo. The word for the monetary penalty for violations was "forfeit". These forfeits ranged from 25c to \$15. The maximum was for violation of the 11th ordinance which provided that: "No person shall exhibit any natural or artificial curiosity or caravans of animals, or other shews (sic—and page Ed Sullivan) unless such person shall have permission from the trustees . . ." It was also unlawful for a trustee to accept a free ticket for such shows.

Since there was no fire department at the time, the first ordinance required the trustees to make an annual inspection of each building in the village "to discern sourcees from which damage by fire may be expected."

Ordinance No. 2 set aside one fifth part of all streets for sidewalks, which were to be kept clear of "boards, shingles, wood, timber, wagon carts, sleighs, wheelbarrows and other obstructions" under penalty of 50 cents forfeit for every 24 hours the obstruction continued.

A stiff forfeit of \$5 was provided for horse and buggy traffic violations and it was further decreed that there could be no "horse racing, trotting matches or improper or immoderate riding or driving . . . in any street or alley."

Ordinance 8 stated that "no person shall set fire to any shavings or other rubbish within any street or alley, unless the same be done between the rising sun and 12 o'clock noon under penalty of One Dollar."

The forfeits seem small today but it must be remembered that the economy of the area was largely one of barter and that hard money was scarce. Furthermore the dollar was worth then 10 or 12 times what it is today. When viewed in this perspective the fines seem pretty high.

## THE GREAT ELKS FAIR

Nothing like it had ever before been seen in Oneonta and no entertainment in the future was to match it in size, splendor and drawing power.

When "A Trip Around the World", conducted by Oneonta Lodge 1312, B.P.O.E. in its newly enlarged clubhouse on Main Street (now the Eagles Club) ended on the night of April 9, 1922, after a week of fun and frenzy, the Elks were richer, despite heavy expenses, by some \$10,000 and several thousand people had had an experience they were not soon to forget.

The Fair, profits from which were used to furnish the building, was planned for months by a committee consisting of E. M. Ronan, H. W. Fluhrer, F. G. Sherman, Fred N. VanWie, C. R. McCarthy, F. A. Herrieff, Frank Danforth, O. C. DeLong and P. J. Gallagher.

Various "countries" were visited during the tour and no expense was spared to make each locale as close to the original as possible. Elaborate sets were painted by Lou Sherwood and authentic costumes secured.

The club lobby was transformed into a railroad terminal. Here the traveler stepped into a "train" and was in California when he emerged from the other end. In charge of the Golden State was "Hon. Ralph Wyckoff, Senator, guide lecturer and expert on flowers".

Aboard a "steamer" the tourist was conveyed to Hawaii, where "Sir David Mills, former attendant at the Court of Queen Lil, knows all the Hula girls". Here, as in all the other countries, were booths for the sale of merchandise peculiar to the region. Local maidens and matrons, attired in grass skirts, provided the proper entertainment.

Treasure Island, where all the characters made famous by Robert Louis Stevenson could be found, was the domain of "Captain Harry Bard, understudy of Captain Kidd. He's a fierce looking pirate, but gentle".

Japan and Italy were next and then Turkey where, according to the tour prospectus, "Abdul Ali Earle Elmore, head keeper of the Sultan's Harem, will personally conduct travelers through the palace. At considerable expense a visit has been arranged to a harem, where will be seen many beautiful women in all their splendor and finery".

Holland and Spain (bullring and all) came next and then La Belle France with its Cafe de la Paix. Here reigned Monsieur Eugene Ward and that noted poilu, Joseph A. McCarthy. Prohibition was in force and of course only soft drinks were sold. It should be said, however, that these were of various degrees of softness, ranging from the quite innocuous to some that would bounce if dropped.

The trip ended in Cuba, the gaily transformed lodge room. In this island paradise (this was forty years ago) were cabaret shows and dancing to music by such famous musicians as Nate Pendleton, John Canning, Lloyd Lawson, Rudy Bagg and Ken Yager. Here were displayed roulette wheels and other gambling devices (for exhibition purposes only, you understand).

All in all, each of the six was "A Night to Remember".



## DIETZ THE PIONEER

It was a bold project, that scheme of Jacob Dietz' to build a railroad from the head of Otsego Lake to the Erie Canal at Fort Plain and to make the Susquehanna navigable from the lake to the Pennsylvania line by means of dams, canals and locks, but it never got beyond the planning stage.

Another dream of this ambitious Oneonta pioneer was to build a railroad down the valley. This idea finally came to fruition but Jacob Dietz had been dead for twenty years before such men as E. R. Ford, Harvey Baker and Jared Goodyear finished the work which he had begun.

Jacob Dietz, as remarkable a man as ever lived in Oneonta, was born in Albany County in 1790 of Palatine stock. In 1811 he married Hannah Price and about a year later they came to Oneonta and purchased of Michael Sherman for \$1,000 the land between the Meigs and Brown (later the E. R. Ford) farms.

The land extended, insofar as Main Street frontage was concerned, from near the corner of Chestnut Street to just beyond the site of the present Hotel Oneonta and stretched to the north beyond the present Walnut Street.

He built a store and a fine home upon the site now occupied by Bresee's and erected an ashery just off the bank across the street. He engaged in the mercantile, ashery and lumber business, being one of the big rafters of timber down the Susquehanna.

Dietz was a highway supervisor for several years from 1816, a justice of the peace for some years and commissioner of education for four terms. During 1825 and 1826 he was supervisor of the then town of Milford. He was instrumental in forming the town of Oneonta in 1830 and, according to one report, it was he who suggested the name. He was the third postmaster of the village.

The problems of transportation were his earnest concern and he early conceived the idea of a railroad through the valley. He and Sherman Page of Unadilla, at their own expense, surveyed a line from Unadilla to Colliersville. The Charlotte Turnpike was chartered in 1830 and Dietz was one of the original directors. He took an equal interest in the Franklin Turnpike, which was chartered in 1831.

He was a moving spirit in all of Oneonta's early improvements. When funds were being raised in 1815 for the erection of the original Presbyterian church, he was the most liberal contributor.

Jacob Dietz did not live to see the progress which the completion of the projects he had fostered was to bring about. He died in 1831 at the age of 41 and was buried in Riverside Cemetery, back of his beloved church.

Two of his sons, Jacob, Jr. and Gould P., ran a clothing store here for some years. In 1853 they opened Dietz Street through their property. Jacob built the house at the corner of Dietz and Wall Streets which was the home of Dr. Meigs Case for years. Its site is now a parking lot.

Gould erected, in 1853, a house on Dietz Street where Walnut now crosses. When the latter street was extended to Church in 1895 this house was moved and is now 6 Walnut, the home of Dr. Frederick M. Binder. It was for years the residence of Joseph S. Lunn and later of his son, William.

## YEAR WORLD WENT MAD

1927! It was a year of high daring and of low crime, of great events and of wonderful nonsense. In short, it was "the year the world went mad".

It was the year Charles Lindbergh soared to world fame on the wings of the Spirit of St. Louis and Calvin Coolidge uttered his "twelve little words": "I do not choose to run for President in nineteen twenty-eight".

In 1927 Tunney beat Dempsey in the "long count" fight and Babe Ruth belted sixty homers. Bill Tilden ruled the tennis world and Bobby Jones was king of golfdom.

It was the year of Peaches and Daddy Browning, of Jimmy Walker, Betty Comp-ton and Texas Guinan. The Hall-Mills murder and the Gray-Snyder slaying filled the papers and the Sacco and Vanzetti executions shook the world.

What was happening in Oneonta during that memorable period? By the time November came, Oneontans were so surfeited with suspense and drama that they were unable to generate much excitement of their own. The journals of the time record only the commonplace happenings of an ordinary year.

Bertus C. Lauren had been reelected mayor and would work with five Republican aldermen, Clarence Congdon, Lewis Atwell, Russell Brigham, William Lunn and Harold France and one Democrat, Ellery Tripp of the Sixth Ward. Lee VanWoert was reelected city judge and Charles Bowdish chamberlain.

One problem before the Common Council was whether Silver and Oneonta Creeks, which overflowed periodically, were the responsibility of the city or of the abutting property owners. Today, 36 years later, that question is still unsettled.

The OHS football team was celebrating an unbeaten season. It is true that Walton had tied Oneonta 6 to 6, but Sidney, Unadilla, Hartwick Seminary and Cooperstown had been roundly trounced. These were small schools to be sure but Oneonta was only in its third year of the revival of the gridiron sport.

The lettermen were: Captain Bob Simmons and Bill Brown, tackles; Ed Bockes and Fred Townsend, guards; Arly Wilber, Don Brand and Dan Orcutt, ends; Vic Onffroy, center; Joe Pondolfino, quarterback; Hank Becker, fullback; Harold Murray, Myron Stanley and Frank Conte, halfbacks; and Frank Angellotti, manager.

Interest in aviation was on the increase and there was much agitation for an airport. Oneontans owning planes were Daniel Franklin, Floyd Wallace, E. LaVerne Whitbeck, Carlton Hinman and Earle P. Elmore. The Plains flats were being used but hangars and other facilities were lacking.

Zita of Albany (once the most famous name in area musical circles) was the attraction at the Armistice Day Military Ball held by the American Legion at Sherman's Music Hall on lower Main Street.

O. P. Williams was hurrying to get as much work done as possible on the Meri-dale highway before winter set in. This was to be the second most expensive highway in the state at the time. Work was progressing on the block now housing the Penney store and on the Huddleston-Walton bakery on Market Street.

It was a prosperous year, a happy one, one of the good ones.

## WE GET ELECTRICITY

The events of November and December in 1887 shed a new light upon affairs in Oneonta. In those months electricity came to town, the arc light making its appearance on Thanksgiving eve while on the night before Christmas the wonderful incandescent bulbs were illuminated for the first time.

The candle and kerosene lamp era came to an end some years earlier when, on January 17, 1882, after months of tedious preparation, artificial gas was admitted to the mains. The first customers were the business houses of Moody and Gould, E. R. Ford, Jr., Morris Brothers and Reynolds and Mulford. Today about three thousand customers use natural gas (introduced in 1954) for cooking and heating.

Early in 1887 the Oneonta Electric Light and Power Company was organized, with Dr. M. L. Ford, Frank Miller, Harlow E. Bundy, Frank Gould and D. F. Wilber as directors. This same group controlled the gas company and the two outfits soon merged.

A dynamo to furnish power for arc lighting was installed in the gas house. The first customers were the Central and Windsor hotels, the Carr and Bull clothing store and Gildersleeve's drug store. The price for store lighting was eight to ten dollars a year for a single arc light.

Meanwhile an order had been given to Westinghouse for a 650 light "machine" and 600 incandescent lights and this type of illumination was inaugurated on Christmas eve. In 1888 a brick power plant was built on Prospect Street (now the Holbrook and Howey warehouse). Four steam engines generating 250 horsepower were installed.

Although about every business concern was electrically lighted, the idea spread slowly among householders. In 1896 only six homes in Oneonta were wired. Today there are 4,600 accounts in the city and its immediate vicinity.

The homes which used "juice" were those of Judge Burr Mattice at the corner of Luther and Main; Sylvester Ford, 359 Main, where the Bresee apartments now are; George W. Fairchild, now the Masonic Temple; Frank Miller, 3 Grand; Russell Baird, 1 Church, long the home of Dr. M. Latcher; and George Baird, 76 Chestnut, later the Physicians Building and now the site of Loblaws.

Until 1897 the Prospect Street plant supplied the small demand for the new luxury. In that year the hydro plant at East End was completed and the next year steam power was added there.

In 1918 came the consolidation of the Oneonta Light and Power Company into the New York State Gas and Electric Corporation. This became a part of the Associated system in the '20s. When that utility empire was broken up during the Depression, the company became the New York State Electric and Gas Corporation, which now serves a large part of New York state.

Most of the electricity used locally comes from the Jennison steam plant at Bainbridge but hook-ups with other systems guarantee adequate supplies under any conditions.

In the early days electricity was on from dusk to dawn only. Light bills were on the basis of fifty cents a month per lamp. In 1898 the present kilowatt hour method was introduced, with rates starting at fifteen cents per kilowatt hour. Ten cents was the lowest possible rate no matter how much current was used.



## FAMOUS D.L.I.

"After 7 p.m. every student must stay in his room and study; male students may visit the young ladies of the school only between 4 and 7 p.m. and then only in public parlors; no student may visit a billiard parlor or play billiards, neither may he play cards, gamble, drink intoxicants, use tobacco or indulge in profane language."

Those were pretty rugged rules of conduct, especially when violation meant expulsion from the Delaware Literary Institute. A century ago this school at Franklin had a country wide reputation, drawing students from such far away places as Georgia, Texas, Mississippi, Tennessee, Michigan and Puerto Rico.

The famous institution was founded in 1935 to train young men for the ministry and young ladies for the mission field. In time the school broadened its purpose, offering such courses as classical, engineering, business and general education. Great emphasis was placed on teaching students how to conduct themselves as ladies and gentlemen.

The first building, Old Stone Hall, was built in 1835 at the end of Institute Street. This boasted both a laboratory and a library. Attending the school at that time were 45 boys and 38 girls. The attendance would later exceed 400.

This building burned in 1856 and was replaced by a stone structure which still stands. Half of it is used by the Central School and the other portion houses the American Legion and the Grange. In 1851 a girls' dormitory called Ladies Hall was built on the present school site. In 1857 Chapel Hall was erected across the street to house the boys. This is now the Masonic Temple.

There was neither running water nor toilet facilities in either of the residence halls. Kerosene lamps furnished the illumination and these had to be cleaned and filled each day. The price of board was \$65 for the spring term and \$60 for the winter.

Social activities were limited and were usually sponsored by the school societies. These were "Excelsior", "Aurora" and "Waterburia" for the girls and "E.C.", "Independent Society" and "Alpha Society" for the young men. "E.C." is still in existence and is the oldest preparatory school fraternity in the country, having been founded in 1844.

Commencement week was the big time for the school. As many as 4,000 alumni, members of students' families and friends would crowd Franklin for the festivities. A large tent would be erected, holding a platform for the plays, debates and orations which would precede the formalities of graduation night.

D.L.I. continued as such until 1902 when land and buildings were transferred to Union School District No. 10. The dormitories had not been used as such for some time. Ladies Hall was for some years a boarding house, "The Ouleout", for summer guests. Chapel Hall was acquired in 1911 by the Masonic Lodge.

In 1929 the school district centralized with 12 others and plans were made for a new building. Citizens objected to razing the historic stone school so the site of Ladies Hall was chosen. The present school, now known as Franklin Central School and Delaware Literary Institute, was finished in 1931.

## UNITED PRESBYTERIANS

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new; And God fulfills himself in many ways."

There may be something symbolic in the fact that where the United Presbyterian church stands at the corner of Main Street and Walling Avenue once flourished a famous wilderness tavern. Since 1784 there has been a building on this corner — first the log tavern, then one of boards, next the large brick Walling mansion and now a stately church.

The United Presbyterian Church, although one of the younger religious organizations in the city, has a proud history. It began in 1887 when Rev. James R. Frazier of Davenport began to hold Sunday afternoon services in the Stanton Opera House and in various other halls around the village.

On May 8, 1889, Mr. Frazier met with the worshippers in Blend Hall and the church was organized with the following charter members: Mr. and Mrs. James Dougherty, Mrs. Hartford Nelson, Miss Ella Patterson, Miss Sarah Stronigan and Benjamin Tiffany. Mr. Dougherty and Mr. Tiffany were the first ruling elders and the initial trustees were Judge H. D. Nelson, A. R. Gibbs and Mr. Tiffany.

Rev. Leslie E. Hawk was the first pastor. A permanent place of worship was needed and in 1890 the home of Emory P. Russell on Dietz Street was purchased for about \$6,000. It had been used as a conservatory of music and contained a hall seating about one hundred people. It stood where the entrance to the Wilber Bank parking lot is now, having been moved back some years before from Main Street facing Broad. It was once the home of Dewitt Ford, eldest son of E. R. Ford.

In 1893 about twenty additional feet of Dietz Street frontage was bought and a brick church was erected at a cost of \$3,950. The building committee was composed of Rev. Hawk, John McLaury, James Dougherty, Grant W. Laidlaw and Munson B. TenBroeck. The first service in this building was held on March 11, 1894.

During the pastorate of Rev. Thomas F. B. Smith (1901-05) electric lights were installed in the church and the mortgage upon the property was paid off. The women of the congregation raised the money and purchased an organ.

The fortieth anniversary of the congregation was held in May of 1929 and at that time the need for larger quarters became apparent. The answer to the problem came in the form of a fire which completely destroyed the church on the morning of December 1, 1929. Rev. Virgil M. Cosby was pastor at that time.

After much consideration the present site was chosen and a committee headed by Robert Hall contracted for the erection of a new church and manse at a cost of about \$150,000. Following the fire and until the new building was ready for occupancy, services were held in St. James Episcopal Church.

The first service held in the new church was the funeral on June 8, 1931, of William Wright (grandfather of W. Clyde Wright), the senior elder and a large contributor to the building fund.

The present pastor, Rev. Mark S. M. Ray, guides the spiritual destinies of nearly 400 earnest persons, hard at work at their Christian duties and looking confidently to the future.

## NAMES ON THE LAND

There are Oneontas in Alabama and in Tennessee, in Oregon, in Kansas and in California. Michigan has an Otsego County, an Otsego Lake and a village of Otsego. Names reminiscent of this region can be found in many other parts of the country.

Since Otsego and Oneonta are Indian names of purely local origin, it is obvious that they were carried abroad by men who once lived hereabouts. During the first half of the nineteenth century the county was only a stopping off place for many of the immigrants who flooded in from New England.

Before the Revolution Otsego county had a population of perhaps nine hundred persons. Some were Palatinate Germans from the Schoharie and Mohawk valleys. There was a sprinkling of Holland Dutch and the rest were in the main of English, Irish and Scots stock. Many had come directly from their native lands.

During the war all of the settlements were destroyed and the population dropped to zero. With the conflict over, many of the former residents returned and hordes of New Englanders followed them. The great Yankee invasion had begun. In they flocked, from Massachusetts and Connecticut and all the other states, bringing with them their customs and many of their institutions. In the cultural battle which followed, the Yankees, aided by weight of numbers, conquered the Yorkers in nearly every category of conflict.

By 1830 the population of Otsego was 51,362, a figure which would not be reached again for one hundred and thirty years. By this time the "Otsego country" was no longer the Far West. Greener pastures were beckoning and the exodus began. As many people left as came into the county and the population remained about stationary for many years.

Some of the families settled in western New York but most continued west, to Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Michigan, to Kansas and Iowa. Some pushed on to the lands bordering the Pacific.

Just as their forebears had brought from their New England homes such place names as Springfield, Worcester, Exeter and Pittsfield, so the emigrants from Otsego took with them names which are native to the county.

Of the states carved out of the old Northwest Territory, Ohio was the nearest and the first to receive settlers from the east. By 1860, more than 190,000 native New Yorkers were living in that state.

Many names famous in Ohio history had their origin in Otsego county. Abram Garfield of Worcester went to Cuyahoga county in 1820, and ten years later his son, James A., the twentieth president of the United States, was born there. David A. Starkweather, Dwight Jarvis, George Worthington and James F. Clark were other Otsegoans who made names for themselves in the Buckeye State.

Indiana, Illinois and Michigan received many Otsego county men who played a large part in the development of those states, founding villages and leaving their mark upon the land in other ways.

The discovery of gold in California had great effect on the county. Scores made their way around the Horn or crossed by the several land routes. Many stayed there, including the most famous of all '49ers, Collis P. Huntington.



## FIRST IN TOWN

It is called Scrambling Avenue on the city map although the local members of the family after which it was named wrote it Scramling. But whatever the spelling, the name of the short street in the Sixth Ward is the only reminder of the first family to settle in what is now the town of Oneonta.

The three brothers who once owned a thousand acres on the Plains had numerous offspring and Scramling blood flows in the veins of many Oneontans, but the male line has died out hereabouts and no one by that name has lived in the city or vicinity for years.

The Scramlings, of Palatine German stock, were early settlers near Fort Plain in the Mohawk Valley. Henry, the eldest of the brothers, was a friend of Sir William Johnson and having heard much of the famed valley of the Susquehanna, he bought of Johnson a thousand acres of the "Dreamland Tract".

In about 1773 Henry Scramling settled on his land, building a log cabin near the mouth of the Otego Creek. He had been in the valley about two years when the events of the Revolution forced him to return to his former home, where he found that his father had been killed by the Indians and his brothers, David and George, had been captured and taken to Canada, where they were prisoners for about two years.

Following the cessation of hostilities, Henry, together with his brothers and their wives and their brothers-in-law, John and David Young, returned to the Susquehanna Valley and settled upon their lands, which embraced eight hundred acres in the Plains section and two hundred on the south side of the river.

Henry returned to his former home near the mouth of the Otego. David settled on the land later known as the John VanWoert farm while George took the farm next east, since known as the Peter VanWoert farm and still later as the Jenks and Tyler farm.

The places occupied by John and David Young were further up the river, the David Young farm being owned later by Stoughton Alger and then by Ephraim Parish. Upon a knoll on this farm, about midway between the highway and the river, can still be seen the private cemetery where rest the remains of members of these pioneer families.

The land across the river was occupied by the descendants of David Scramling, the home of Edward Carroll on the back road to Otego being in part the old Scramling house.

The Scramlings were prominent in the life of the town and village until near the turn of the century. Allen Scramling was a prosperous farmer whose land between River and Chestnut Streets included much of the land now covered by the railroad yards. His large home which once stood opposite the Meridale Jersey plant was a showplace.

George Scramling was a prominent lawyer and an Otsego County judge. Egbert Scramling was for years the cashier of the old First National Bank.

Many Scramlings throughout the country are descendants of the pioneer brothers but the name has vanished from Oneonta save for the designation on a street sign.

## HOW D.&H. BEGAN

The "Stourbridge Lion" was a far cry from the huge locomotives that carried the D.&H. name a century later but when it chugged along at ten miles an hour on the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company line between Honesdale and Carbondale, Pa., on August 8, 1829, it was the first steam engine ever to run on rails in the United States.

The fascinating story of the D.&H., a road with as much history as any in the country, began in 1814 with William and Maurice Wurtz, Philadelphia drygoods merchants, and a black, rock-like substance called coal. Most people thought that the stuff, so plentiful in the Pennsylvania hills, was unburnable and of no use.

The Wurtz brothers disagreed, however. After a long search for the proper kind of "stone coal", they opened a mine at a spot in the Lackawanna valley which they called Carbondale. At first the coal was transported to Philadelphia by hauling it on sleds over the Moosic mountains and then floating it on rafts down the Lackawaxen and Delaware Rivers.

A wider market was soon needed and New York City looked promising. Encouraged by the success of the infant Erie Canal, the brothers formed a company in 1823 to build a canal from the Hudson River to the Delaware. In 1825 the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company was incorporated. The first president was Philip Hone, later to become mayor of New York.

The canal was opened for business in 1825. It was 108 miles long and ascended from tidewater at Roundout, now a part of Kingston, to a height of 972 feet above sea level at Honesdale, its Pennsylvania terminus. Boats had to pass through 110 locks, 27 more than the Erie Canal had.

The first railroad constructed by the Delaware and Hudson, and the second in the nation, was a gravity road between Carbondale and Honesdale, where there was a rise and fall of 1,834 feet in fifteen miles. Gravity provided most of the motive power. Mules pulled the loaded cars on the level stretches and took the empties up the return slopes. The animals were carried on flatcars during the gravity runs.

In 1829 the company imported the "Stourbridge Lion" from England. On August 8 this tiny engine made its historic trip of three miles over the wooden rails. It was considered unfit for the poor roadbed and tight curves of the road, however, and made but one run but it was the first time a steam locomotive was used in the Western Hemisphere.

In 1870 the company leased in perpetuity the just completed Albany and Susquehanna Railroad, now the Susquehanna division of the D.&H. The next year it acquired the prosperous Rensselaer and Saratoga road, which ran from Albany to Whitehall and east to Rutland, Vt., thereby getting access to coal markets in the east and in New England.

In 1875 the D.&H. took over sections of road already built by the Albany and Plattsburgh Railroad and completed a line to the Canadian border, by means of which, via the Grand Trunk, trains could be run to Montreal.

Both the gravity railroad in Pennsylvania and the canal operation were discontinued in 1899 and the word "Canal" was dropped from the company name.

## HARRY W. LEE

The Oneonta Daily Star grew tremendously in size, circulation and revenue from the day of its founding in 1890 until 1936, when Harry W. Lee, the editor and publisher, died, but in character and philosophy it changed not at all. It started as a small town newspaper with its focus on people and it stayed that way through forty-six years.

It was not that Harry Lee was averse to improvement. He kept full pace with the changes in printing and publishing techniques through the years but he had definite ideas as to the kind of paper his readers wanted and he clung to them tenaciously.

Harry Webb Lee was born in Kirkwood, N. Y., in 1870. His father, Rev. James N. Lee, was a Methodist clergyman and the boy lived in various communities during his father's pastorates.

He came to Oneonta in 1884 when his father was appointed superintendent of the Oneonta district of his church. After attending Oneonta High School, he took an examination for a teacher's certificate. This he passed but was unable to secure a position because of his extreme youth. When he was deemed old enough, he taught for a few years at Mt. Vision.

Harry Lee then turned to journalism and was a reporter on the Oneonta Daily News, a short-lived paper. In 1890, at the age of only twenty, he established the Star with the financial backing of D. F. Wilber.

The paper was published in the basement of the old Wilber National Bank, where South Main Street now meets Main, until 1901 when Mr. Lee bought the block on Broad Street now occupied by the Bern store. The Star was published there until after it was purchased in 1944 by the Ottawa interests.

Harry Lee was not a crusading journalist. His interest in every project designed to improve the community was intense and his personal labors in behalf of good causes were often arduous but he conceived it to be the primary purpose of his paper to publish "all the news that's fit to print" with special emphasis on the doings and the comings and goings of people. To that end he filled the sheet with "personals" and other folksy items.

He wrote few editorials but when one did roll out of his typewriter it was straightforward and hard hitting. Those were the days when journalists worked twelve to fourteen hours a day and Harry Lee labored as hard and as long as any of his employees. His style was lucid, or so it was after someone had supplied the necessary punctuation, for periods, commas and the like meant little to him.

Harry Lee was a member of the First Methodist Church, of the Board of Trustees of Hartwick College, of the Elks and of the Masonic Lodge and Chapter. He had been president of the Oneonta and Country Clubs and of the Chamber of Commerce. For years he was a member of the Board of Visitors of Oneonta State Normal School and a building on the SUCO campus is named in his memory.

Harry W. Lee died on March 18, 1936, in St. Petersburg, Florida, and is buried in Glenwood Cemetery, Oneonta.



## CATSKILL TURNPIKE

As you drive from Unadilla to Franklin you may notice by the side of the road worn distance markers incased in cement. These are the only visible reminders of one of the most famous roads in the state, the Catskill Turnpike over which many Oneonta pioneers first came into the valley.

This thoroughfare properly dates from 1802 as a turnpike but the road itself is much older. Its eastern end had been opened long before the Revolution with a terminus in the Charlotte valley although then it was little more than a cleared trail through the forest.

The turnpike had been intended as a through route from the Hudson to Ithaca but little work was ever done on it west of Unadilla. The stretch from Catskill to the Susquehanna was the first usable route to the West, antedating by four years the Great Western Turnpike connecting Albany with Buffalo and running through Cherry Valley.

The road ran from Wattles Ferry (near where the upper bridge at Unadilla now stands) through Franklin to Treadwell, thence to Meredith Square, Doonan's Corners, Kortright, Stamford, South Gilboa, Manorkill and over Mt. Pisgah to Catskill.

An alternate route beyond Stamford which was used extensively in the later days of the Turnpike was through Grand Gorge, Prattsville, Windham and over Windham Mountain.

The stockholders of the Catskill and Susquehanna Turnpike Company, whose stock was limited to \$12,000 in shares of \$20 each, were persons through whose lands the road passed. In return for building and maintaining the highway, these men were allowed the revenue from ten tollgates set up along the route.

In building the road the practice of the old Roman roadmakers in going in straight lines from point to point, was followed. This made it rough for the stages, which made twice weekly runs at a passenger cost of five cents per mile. A stage that left Catskill Wednesday morning reached Unadilla Friday night.

There were many inns (some of which are still standing) along the route and it was not uncommon for one of them to entertain thirty or forty guests at a time. The wide tired freight wagons were huge in size and drawn by six or eight horses. Stages drawn by four or six horses were common.

The road not only brought settlers into the territory and provided the only means of getting the products of farm and workshop to market, but the vast traffic brought easy prosperity to the people along the way and built up towns and villages. Kortright, now a tiny hamlet, once maintained a church of five hundred members, said to have been the largest church society west of the Hudson river.

The most prosperous period for the road was from 1820 to 1830. With the building of the Charlotte Turnpike from North Kortright through Oneonta to Gilbertsville, the Catskill Turnpike lost its patronage to the easier grade and became just another country thoroughfare.

## *BIRTH OF B. OF R. T.*

The Oneonta Herald passed up a good story back in 1883 when it failed to make even small mention of a meeting of eight Delaware and Hudson brakemen in Charlie Woodworth's caboose or of the later gathering in Blend Hall some weeks later.

Of course the editors could not know at the time that the group being organized was to become the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, one of the largest and most powerful railroad unions in the country.

The small red caboose where the railroaders met that summer's night now stands in Neahwa Park in a setting which befits one of the most famous railroad cars in America.

The men who gathered in the tiny car and conceived the idea of the Brotherhood of Railroad Brakemen (as it was known until 1889) were C. J. Woodworth, William Gurney, Eugene McCarty, Union C. Osterhout, Daniel Hopkins, Elmer Wessel, H. S. Wilber and Daniel J. McCarthy. On September 23, 1883, a somewhat larger group met in Blend Hall and formed the Grand Lodge of the order.

The organization was designed to improve the lot of the railroad man insofar as wages and working conditions were concerned, and to help make the occupation less hazardous. Inspiration and help came from two other unions, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and to an even greater degree from the Oneonta Cigar Makers Union.

At first the local men were all members of the Grand Lodge. News of the organization spread rapidly and many applications for charters for subordinate lodges were received. On March 16, 1884, a subordinate lodge was formed in Oneonta from the membership of the Grand Lodge.

The local lodge was originally called Eugene V. Debs Lodge No. 1 after the then famous (and later notorious) labor leader, who had been helpful in forming the group. After the Chicago strike of 1894 the name was changed to Daniel Hopkins Lodge No. 1 in honor of a local member who had been a Grand Lodge officer.

The organization prospered from the start. At the first national convention, held in Oneonta in 1884, the delegates represented two thousand members from thirteen states. The brotherhood soon spread throughout the United States and Canada.

The 25th anniversary of the BRT in 1908, the 50th in 1933 and the 75th in 1958 brought to Oneonta thousands of members from every part of the country. In 1948, at the time of Oneonta's Centennial celebration, the order observed its 65th anniversary with the dedication of a memorial in Neahwa Park to the 857 BRT men who died in the two World Wars.

In 1924 the historic caboose, repaired many times through the years and finally retired to an obscure siding, was rescued from oblivion, restored by the railroad to its original condition, and placed in Neahwa Park.

There it stands as a constant reminder that Oneonta was once a railroad town known from coast to coast as the home of the biggest roundhouse in the world, the originator of the "hump" and the birthplace of the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen.

## LINN OF MORRIS

But for a cloudburst and a polio epidemic Morris would not have had the Linn Tractor plant, its most important industry for many years.

The story of this concern, whose machines were once sold throughout the world, began in Washburn, Maine, in 1877 when Holman Harry Linn was born. Show business appealed to him throughout his boyhood and in 1900 he and his wife started a small circus featuring motion pictures (then a decided novelty), a pony and some dogs trained by Linn. His wife sang. The show traveled from town to town in New England and New York.

At first the troupe traveled by horse drawn conveyance but Linn soon bought an automobile to draw the wagons containing the animals, tents and other equipment. The auto was also a novelty and when he had pitched his tents, Linn would put the car under cover and charge five cents to view it.

Linn was a born mechanic and soon he was experimenting with various types of machines to draw his train of show wagons. In 1906 he built a vehicle with two gas engines connected to one drive shaft and later tried a steam propelled car.

Experiments with various types of tractors led to his invention of one with a full, flexible caterpillar tread. He had this built in Syracuse and in 1912 was coming from Sidney to Oneonta with the tractor drawing his wagons when he encountered a landslide across the road caused by a heavy rain. He turned back to find another way north and eventually landed in Morris.

It was toward the end of the season and Linn had been looking for a place to winter his troupe. The Morris Fair grounds looked good to him so he rented the necessary space for his animals and gear as well as a house in which to live and a small shop where he could work on improving his tractor.

Linn had long considered giving up show business and devoting his entire time to manufacturing tractors for sale. He saw possibilities in the water power from Hargrave Lake and decided to center his activities in Morris. He formed a company with local capital and started making his improved type of tractor, whose caterpillar tread could adapt itself to any kind of terrain.

The company prospered and was soon shipping machines to all parts of the world. Many were used in Otsego County up to a few years ago for plowing roads in the winter and hauling road machinery during other seasons.

In 1927 the company was sold to the Republic Motor Corporation, with Linn remaining as vice-president in charge of engineering. He had also invented a one wheel auto trailer called the "U-Can-Back" and he created the Linn Trailer Corporation in Oneonta to manufacture it. Other types of trailers were added to the line from time to time.

H. H. Linn owned an airplane which he used on all of his business trips. On the morning of July 3, 1937, he, his pilot and the plant manager and his wife started for Syracuse from the small airfield atop Patrick Hill. The craft was but a few hundred feet in the air when it went into a dive, crashed into the wooded hillside and burst into flames. The manager was thrown clear and survived but H. H. Linn and the other two perished.



## MAN WITH CAMERA

Probably many Oneontans have seen Mt. Watkins, the peak magnificently reflected in Mirror Lake in the Yosemite Valley, but we believe few have known that the famed mountain was named after a man who was born in a hotel at the corner of Main and Chestnut Streets, went west in 1849 with Collis P. Huntington and became one of the world's great scenic photographers.

Working a century ago with crude equipment, Carleton E. Watkins set a standard of technical and artistic excellence which few of his successors have met. For fifty years he was the foremost photographer of the scenic wonders of the West and received many honors, among them first prize at the 1868 Paris International Exhibition.

Carleton Emmons Watkins was born in 1829 and was the son of John M. Watkins, a Scotsman who operated inns in Oneonta for many years. He was named for Carleton Emmons, predecessor of the elder Watkins as proprietor of the Otsego House and later the owner of the famous Emmons Tavern east of the village.

Across Main Street was the stone store of Solon and Collis Huntington and Collis and young Watkins became fast friends. In 1849 they set out together for the gold fields of California. There the paths of the two men diverged but they remained good friends.

Watkins became a photographer by chance. In 1854 he was a store clerk in San Francisco where he met R. H. Vance, who ran daguerrotype studios in Frisco, San Jose and Sacramento. The operator in the San Jose gallery had quit and Vance asked Watkins to run the shop until he could get another man. Watkins knew nothing of photography but Vance figured that he could take orders and hold the fort until help arrived.

Watkins soon mastered the difficult wet plate techniques and no relief man was needed. He worked two years for Vance and then returned to San Francisco and opened his own studio. Soon he was spending a large portion of each summer traveling through the western states and taking incomparable pictures of the wonders of nature.

In 1859 he visited the Mariposa Grove and was the first man to photograph the giant redwoods. The Yosemite Valley, the Columbia River country, the Comstock and Anaconda mines, the Franciscan Missions—Watkins visited them all and immortalized them through pictures.

In 1906 Watkins, almost blind and in financial difficulties, was negotiating with Stanford University for the sale of his plates and pictures when the great earthquake struck San Francisco. In the fire which followed, the entire collection was destroyed.

He was deeply shocked by the loss of his life's work and shortly thereafter retired to a small ranch which Huntington had given him. It was necessary to have him committed to the Napa State Hospital in 1910 and there he died in 1916 at the age of 87.

Priceless collections of his pictures are to be found in the Huntington Library at San Marino, in the libraries at Stanford and the University of California and in the Library of Congress.

## A FRENCH COLONY

Franchot, Rosseau, Renouard, de Villers, Perree, de Lay, Cockrell—the names of the first settlers in the hamlet of Louisville on the Butternut Creek read like the roster of a French village.

As a matter of fact, that is exactly what the community which is now Morris was when it was founded in 1790—a colony composed mostly of men and women who had fled the horrors of the French Revolution.

When peace returned to France, however, most of the "emigrees in the wilderness" returned to their native land. Only one family, the Franchots, remained to become American citizens. The name of Louisville which the village bore in honor of Louis XVI was replaced by that of Morris and survives only in the designation of the local Grange unit.

Although many were Protestant, these Frenchmen were not what are commonly called Huguenots. They were of that breed of Royalists who fled the Reign of Terror and founded such colonies as Asylum, Pa., Louisville and Muller Hill in Central New York and Leraysville, Chaumont and Theresa farther north.

James Le Ray de Chaumont, a French land speculator, was the man who persuaded the refugees to settle hereabouts. Among his holdings were the Hillington tract of the Butler patent in the Butternut valley.

Charles Franchot, a substantial businessman in Lorraine who faced both financial and political difficulties, came to New York in 1789 with his sons, Augustin, Louis, Francois and Stanislas Pascal. Their destination was the French colony of Scioto on the Ohio River. There was Indian trouble there, however, and LeRay persuaded them to settle in Otsego County.

During the first winter Augustin and Francois died, and soon after the father returned to France. They had spent the winter at the home of Andre Renouard, who had a general store. In 1791 Renouard died and Louis Franchot married his widow. For eight years the brothers ran the store, a gristmill and a distillery and made extensive land purchases.

Louis died about 1800 and Pascal took as a partner Volckert VanRensselaer of the Albany patroon family. The partners married the Hansen sisters, thus tying Franchot in with another of the old Hudson River Dutch families.

In 1814 Pascal Franchot retired from the firm of Franchot and VanRensselaer and thereafter devoted his time to a number of other business enterprises. He succeeded Judge William Cooper as agent for LeRay's Otsego land holdings and developed and sold his own large acreage. He was one of the prime movers in the building of the cotton mill in Morris in 1824.

Pascal Franchot (he had dropped the Stanislas years before) was a supervisor, county sheriff and judge of the court of common pleas as well as a charter member of the Masonic lodge and one of the founders of Zion Episcopal Church.

Pascal Franchot died in 1855, one of the wealthiest men in this part of the state. His descendants carried on the prominence of the family. Son Richard was a president of the Albany and Susquehanna railroad, a Civil War colonel and a congressman. A grandson, Nicholas V. V., made a fortune in New York state oil.

## AN EARLY MAP

The first printed map of Oneonta of which we have knowledge is dated 1868 and is contained in the "Atlas of Otsego Co., New York, from actual Surveys by and under the direction of F. W. Beers". This interesting work was published at 95 Maiden Lane, New York, by F. W. Beers, A. D. Ellis and G. G. Soule.

The map shows every business place and residence in the small community and the ownership of each lot. The village had less than one thousand inhabitants at the time but the period was one of growth because of the coming of the railroad three years before and each month saw new houses being built.

There were still less than a score of streets. The village extended to the east only as far as the present Third Street. Beyond that was farm land. Westward, the village limit was about where Fonda Avenue now meets Chestnut. There were but two houses on the latter street beyond West.

Center Street (then called Brook) was the last street in that direction. It had been laid out from West to the Oneonta Creek but there were no houses east of Dietz. The latter street was pretty well built up. There was then no Ford Avenue and Elm Street had no houses beyond Walnut Street, which extended only from Maple to Dietz, where it ran into the Morrell farm, which then furnished milk for much of the village.

Maple Street (which was the road to the Oneonta Creek valley and had been known as Bronson's Lane) was laid out about as far as the present Normal Circle but there were no houses on the left side beyond Walnut Street and but one on the other side.

Grand, Division and Prospect Streets existed but there was but one house on Division Street and none on Prospect. Most of what is now Market Street (originally Mechanic) was a swamp.

What is now Church Street was then called Center and was sparsely populated. There were but four dwellings on either side of the street. High Street went halfway through to West.

Grove Street was then called Church because of the presence of the First Baptist Church (the rear portion of what was until recently the Lutheran Church). This faced Main from the crest of a tree-studded, sloping green where the old Salvation Army building now stands. The street extended only to the top of the hill where it met Milk Street, now Academy.

The Union School had just been built on the site of the present High School and the map shows it, together with the Baptist Cemetery beside it. Before Academy Street was put through from Grove to Fairview, students had to walk through the cemetery to and from school. The bodies were removed in 1872 and reburied in Riverside Cemetery.

On Main Street below the single railroad track were a sawmill, a gristmill, a sash and blind factory and a spoke factory on the south side of the street. There was a cluster of houses around the corner of River and Main.

The shops had not yet been built in 1868 and the place where they would later be located was a swampy area covered with bushes and small trees.



## FRANKLIN TURNPIKE

When it was proposed in 1835 to build a turnpike road from the Ouleout to the Susquehanna there was not even a path through the dense forests which covered Franklin Mountain. The survey was so well made, however, that when the present concrete highway was constructed ninety years later hardly a deviation was made from the course of the old road.

Prior to the construction of the Franklin Turnpike the route to Delhi was by way of the Swart Hollow road with its difficult grades. To get to Franklin one went either to Otego and then over the hill or to Unadilla and thence up the Catskill Turnpike.

In order to provide a better route to the Catskill Turnpike and the interior of Delaware County, the Oneonta and Franklin Turnpike Company was incorporated on April 13, 1835, with a capital of \$4,000. The principal stockholders and first directors were E. R. Ford, John Thompson, Ralph Daniels, Fitch Ford, John Fritts, William Angell and Martin E. Knapp.

In 1836 William A. Miller, Ira McCall and Dr. Samuel R. Case were added to the Board. Later directors included S. F. Miller, Joseph B. Walling, Sylvester Ford, W. S. Fritts, Stephen Parish and Harvey Mann. For years Dr. Case was president and Hon. Samuel F. Miller secretary and treasurer.

For years the turnpike was a toll road, the tollgate being located just beyond the end of the first U-curve on the present road. Most of the receipts were used in maintaining the road, which was always a difficult job, especially in the winter when twenty foot drifts would pile up. No snowplow then available could handle these and the road would have to be shoveled out by hand.

Persons living within a quarter of a mile of the Turnpike could pass over it free. Others paid the following fees: "Every carriage drawn by two horses or other beasts, 12½ cents; every carriage drawn by one horse or other beast, 6¼ cents; every sleigh or sled drawn by two horses or other beasts, 6¼ cents; every sleigh or sled drawn by one horse or other beast, 4 cents; horse and rider or horse led, 4 cents; every score of horses, cattle or mules, 12½ cents; every score of sheep or swine, 6 cents.

When the automobile came upon the scene the same fee was charged for a one-seater as for a one-horse conveyance. Two-seaters paid the same price as a carriage and team.

In 1916 the turnpike company was owned by William L. Miller, Clark McCrum and M. L. Keyes. Suitable arrangements were made with the towns of Oneonta and Franklin and at 3:30 on the afternoon of December 17, 1916, C. E. Holmes, attorney for the company, phoned the tollgate keepers, Mr. and Mrs. Sherrill Edwards, to discontinue taking tolls as the road had become public property.

The present concrete highway to Meridale was started in 1925 and finished two years later. The contractor was Owen P. Williams and the cost was about \$80,000 a mile, making it the second most expensive road built in the state up to that time.

## DAYS IN OLD MAIN

Time was when you could enter the big red schoolhouse on the Hill as a toddling kindergartener and emerge fifteen years later a full grown man or woman with a teacher's certificate, getting all your education under one roof. Prior to 1909 "Old Main" housed a kindergarten, eight grades, a four year high school and a two year training school for teachers.

Let's see what the situation was in 1908, the last full year of the old setup. The first floor of the building was occupied by the elementary and intermediate departments with an assembly hall and classrooms for each division. In the basement were the gymnasium, the manual training room and the toilets.

The high school and teacher training departments occupied the second floor together with the library and the big assembly hall. On the third floor were the laboratory, a few classrooms and the club rooms of the four sororities, Clonian, Arethusa, Agonian and Alpha Delta.

There was no Bugbee School then, the space where it stands being occupied, in part, by a tennis court. The students did their practice teaching in the grades in the main building and at the Center Street School, which, although owned by the village of Oneonta, was leased to the State and run by it.

The faculty was, at least to our mind, outstanding, although of the thirty-three staff members of the two schools but seven had degrees of any kind. There were two with doctorates, two with master's degrees and three with bachelor's.

In those days knowledge of a subject and the ability to impart it were the criteria and the number and arrangement of letters after one's name was immaterial. Judged by those standards, the ONS faculty was superb.

Dr. Percy I. Bugbee was the principal. Academic subjects and methods were taught by Dr. Charles Schumacher, Arthur M. Curtis, Edwin F. Bacon, Frank D. Blodgett, Howard Lyon, Kate M. Dennison, Helen M. S. Sanborn and Florence Matteson.

Charlotte Paulsen taught music and Jessie M. Whalley handled drawing. Frank G. Sanford was the manual training instructor and Amelia E. Armbruster took care of the physical education chores.

The principal of the Intermediate department was Eliza Gee of fond memory and under her were Helen Irving, Helen Fritts and Frances Terrell. Cora Pettit was the strict but fair head of the Primary grades while the teachers were Caroline Hurlburt, Bertha Loveland, Florence Richards, Kate Christman and Sabra Hayden. The kindergarten teachers were Jessie Himes and Edith Murray.

In 1908 the principal of the Center Street School was Addie Hatfield and the teachers of the seven grades were Estella Matteson, Ellen Vaughn, Mabelle Boynton, Alice Esmond, Jennie Green, Faith Brigham and Ellen Hitchcock.

Present day students at State would be appalled by the student conduct rules which then prevailed. Being in a place where liquor was sold meant expulsion. Smoking was allowed nowhere in the building at any time.

If you were a girl, your date had to be approved by the dean of women and if his name was on the "Black List" it was just no go. About the only dances you could attend were those at the Oneonta Club. You could ride in an automobile only by special permission unless the car belonged to your folks.

## CLOTH RAISING

In the olden days our forbears didn't buy their clothes; they raised them. The wool or linen that went into a suit or dress had its origin right on the farm and represented many hours of hard, painstaking labor.

Until nearly the middle of the last century practically every home had its flax and wool wheels and many had hand looms. There was a wood carding and cloth finishing mill in about every community. Hundreds of thousands of sheep grazed the Otsego hills and nearly everyone had his field of flax.

Cotton mills multiplied in the county after 1809 and eventually several million yards of cotton cloth would be woven annually but it was years before people stopped making their own clothes of wool and linen.

In colonial days the wool was carded (combed) in the home but with the invention of a machine, small carding and fulling mills began to be built.

Soon after James McDonald bought the Vanderwerker gristmill in 1803 and moved it from the river to the bank of Silver Creek about where the Elmore mills now are, he built a carding and cloth finishing factory below it. Asa Emmons built one at about the same time on the Slade flats on the south side of the river.

The making of wool cloth was a long and tedious process. After the fleece had been shorn it was cleaned and then dyed. If blue was wanted, indigo had to be purchased but all of the other dyes were made at home of various barks, berries, leaves and flowers.

After the dying the wool was oiled with animal grease, about three pounds of grease being worked into ten pounds of wool. It was then taken to the mill and carded. The grease was then washed out and thread was spun on the big wheel. Last came the weaving on a hand loom little changed from medieval days.

The cloth was then taken to the mill again and "finished". This process varied according to whether flannel, broadcloth or some other finish was wanted but essentially it meant soaking the cloth in fuller's earth and water while pounding it with enormous hammers. This thickened the web and reduced it in length. A nap was then raised by scratching the cloth with thistles. It was then spread on tenter hooks to shrink and dry.

Linen manufacture was even more complicated. When the flax was ripe it was pulled up by the roots and laid out to dry. It was then "rippled" to break off the seed pods and "dew retted" on the ground to get rid of the leaves and softer fibers.

Strong men then broke it on the ponderous flax brake to separate the fibers and get out the hard woody center. The next process was hetcheling, or combing, to divide the fibers to their fine filaments, spread out the long threads in untangled lines and separate the tow, or short fibers. Then thread was spun on the small flax wheel and the cloth woven on the hand loom. Bleaching followed and this was a long, tiring process involving many washings and rinsings.

The result was a linen cloth fine and soft of texture and of an almost unbelievable durability.



## ELMORE MILL FIRE

As soon as the truck cleared the Municipal Building, the firemen could tell that this was a big one. The sky to the southwest was crimson and flames could be seen shooting upward.

Oneonta has had many bad fires but none as fierce and as hard to keep under control as the one which destroyed the Elmore Milling Company plant on the evening of May 7, 1913. One life was lost, several acres of wooden mill buildings were burned and hundreds of tons of flour and grain destroyed.

The night shift was in full swing when at about 9:30 Norman Bleeker, the night foreman, who was working on an upper floor, smelled smoke. He soon found that fire had started around a machine on the first floor where oats were being ground, and was spreading rapidly. He turned in an alarm but before the trucks could arrive practically the entire structure was ablaze. Years of use as a mill had coated everything with flour dust almost as inflammable as gunpowder.

Knowing that the mill buildings were doomed, the firemen turned their attention to getting the horses out of the stables and to saving the one story office and storage building near the viaduct, the brick Bowdish block just below, the coal pockets of the Oneonta Coal and Supply Company in the rear and the houses on River Street Extension (now Neahwa Place).

The D.&H. Fire Company came to the assistance of the city department and it was through its efforts that the coal chutes and nearby buildings were saved. The houses fronting the extension of River Street caught fire many times but with garden hose, a bucket brigade and such help as the firemen could give, the buildings were all saved with the exception of a small barn.

The office furniture and records were removed from the building near the viaduct but hard work saved it (it is still in use) although the rear portion was badly damaged. The tenants were evacuated from the three story Bowdish block, the ground floor of which was occupied by the plumbing and heating firm of Demaree and Riley, and the strenuous endeavors of the firemen and volunteers kept it from destruction.

Ten freight cars loaded with grain were standing on the spur tracks which ran alongside the mill buildings and through the elevators and these were destroyed with their contents. The heat was so intense that the dwellings on the other side of Main Street were in constant danger.

A check of the employees known to have been in the building when the fire started disclosed that Harry Rowland, thirty, who lived with his wife and three small children on Duane Street, was missing. He had come out of the mill with the others but had gone back in after some hose. His charred bones were found in the ruins the next morning.

It was thought that a spark struck from the whirling knives by a nail or other metal object in the oats had caused the fire.

The heavy losses were fully covered by insurance and work was soon started on the modern structure which now covers the site.

## OLD BROAD STREET

The Albany and Susquehanna Railroad chose a good place for its Oneonta station. It was close to the center of the village and hence should have been easy of access. The only difficulty was that there was no way to get to it.

E. R. Ford had a ready solution for that problem. He owned all the land in the vicinity and when the depot was located he opened Broad Street through his property. This was in 1864 and by the time the first train reached Oneonta on August 29, 1865, he had sold much of the land bordering the street and buildings were going up.

Before the rails came, most of the territory south of Main was a swamp, starting near where the viaduct is and following the line of the bluff upon which Main Street is built. This marsh covered most of the region now occupied by Market Street and parts of Broad, South Main, Prospect and Chestnut.

Through the swamp ran Silver Creek, which left its present course near the post-office, turned right and ran close to the bluff to about the present Chestnut Street where it turned south for a few rods and then followed the course of the present mill-race to the river.

In 1863 the creek was diverted to its present channel and the swamp was drained. In 1881 Harvey Baker opened up Mechanic Street (now Market) through property which he owned west of the Ford holdings.

Before Broad Street was created, the only building in the area was a cooper shop which stood where the Enders store is now. For years a distillery operated in this structure. When the street was put through, this shop was moved to the spot now occupied by the YMCA building.

The oldest building on the street is the one story structure at the corner of Prospect Street. This is all that remains of the big Hathaway House. This hotel was built in 1865 and dispensed hospitality for nearly three-quarters of a century.

The L. P. Butts building on the opposite corner of Broad was built in 1883. Prior to then a blacksmith shop was on the site. The structure just above it, now occupied by Sam Scott's grill, was built in 1866 by E. R. Ford and has housed a variety of enterprises during the past ninety-seven years.

The vacant lot next above is the site of a building erected in 1865 by Mr. Ford. It was used for years as a store and then as a hotel, run by various proprietors. It was razed a few years ago to provide a parking lot.

The next structure, now used by J. J. Maloney as a warehouse, was built in 1896 by Swift and Company and was used by that concern for meat storage and sales until a few years ago.

The big brick Oneonta Grocery Company building was erected in 1905. Its site was once covered by a factory which sent its products to all parts of the United States and South America. Ford and Howe, which erected the building in 1865, manufactured plows, cultivators and other agricultural machines. About seventy-five persons were employed. The business was discontinued in the 1880s.

## THE EARLY FLICKERS

The patrons sat on the edge of their chairs and their hands flexed as the flickering screen showed the train bearing down on poor Pauline, bound hand and foot and lying helpless on the shining rails. Then the picture vanished and "Intermission for Change of Reels" appeared.

Tension relaxed, but only momentarily, for the picture would soon reappear, and how was our heroine going to get out of this predicament? The people knew that she would, but that did not detract from their enthralment as they sat breathless (almost literally) in the tiny Casino, Oneonta's first movie theatre.

Prior to the opening of the Casino 56 years ago, the only motion pictures Oneontans ever saw were when the shows of Hadley and Lyman Howe made their yearly visitations. These were rather uninspiring (to kids) travelogue movies of the Alps and the Eternal City, of the Rockies and Niagara Falls. But they were educational and so Junior had to traipse along with Mother and Father.

And then in 1907 L. H. Shepherd opened the Casino in the store now occupied by Dean Phipps and hearts (especially young ones) beat faster. Then and there a whole new world of entertainment opened up. For a nickel you could share adventure and romance, humor and tragedy.

Your fists clenched and your gorge rose as you watched the city slicker foreclose on the old homestead because he could not have his way with the farmer's daughter, and all to the plaintive strains of "Hearts and Flowers" banged out on an old upright. And then came the illustrated songs and your heartstrings quivered as some local tenor flatted his way through "Honey Boy" or "Red Wing".

The pictures were silent but captions gave you an idea of what was going on and you could imagine the rest. After all, action was what mattered with movies like "The Perils of Pauline" and "Keystone Cops".

The second movie theatre was the Happy Hour which opened where Brady's shoe store now is. In 1911 this nickelodeon moved to Broad Street when the building now housing Ender's furniture store was finished.

The Oneonta Theatre began to show movies, between visits of legitimate shows, about 1913 when the first feature films like "Quo Vadis?" and "Birth of a Nation" were produced. Two or three vaudeville acts were shown with the pictures, with the bill changed twice a week. And all for one thin dime.

George Martin opened a movie theatre in 1916 in the building at the corner of Dietz and Wall Streets now owned by the Oneonta Oil and Fuel Company. A few years later it was bought by the Schine interests and became the Strand, with Charles Rose as manager.

The Maxey Theatre, now the Palace, on Main near Ford, opened in 1922. The motion pictures were all silent until 1927 when "The Jazz Singer" introduced the wonder of synchronized sound.

The entertainment world has come a long way since the day the Casino opened, but we doubt if the kids of today get the kick out of watching the wonder of television that we did as we sat in some smelly, ill ventilated little theatre and watched the thrilling action on the silver screen.



## WHEN COTTON WAS KING

Time was when Cotton was King in Otsego County. Not that the fluffy stuff was ever grown hereabouts (the climate took care of that) but a century and a quarter ago over three and a half million yards of cotton cloth were woven annually in ten mills scattered through the countryside.

The raw material had to be transported long distances, first by water to Catskill and then in wagons or sleighs over abominable roads, but there was an abundance of water power in the days before logging operations diminished the flow in creeks and rivers. And then there was a goodly number of men, women and children willing to work long hours for small pay.

The first cotton mill in the county was the Union Manufactory at Toddsville, built in 1809. This wooden structure burned in 1848 and was rebuilt of stone. Power came from Oaks Creek, which also ran a cotton mill at Oakville, built in 1830. This concern, in addition to weaving, printed about a million yards of calico annually. In the vicinity was a small mill at Fork Shop.

Hope Factory, constructed of wood in 1809 and rebuilt of stone in 1824, was at Index. It was situated about a half mile from Oaks Creek but got its water from that stream through a mill ditch.

Two mills used the Susquehanna as a source of power. The Clintonville factory, between Milford and Hartwick Seminary, was a wooden structure built in 1947 to replace an earlier mill built by one Cockett in 1815.

The plant at Phoenix Mills was built in 1815 of wood and replaced in 1835 by one of stone. This was the last mill in Otsego to be operated. In 1875 it changed from cotton to wool and as a branch of the Utica Knitting Company ran until 1912. In 1917 it was razed and the stone used to build Bassett Hospital.

In 1812 a frame factory was built in Morris, to be replaced by one of stone in 1825. The Morrises, Franchots and Washbons were interested in this venture. There was also a small mill near Gilbertsville. These plants got their power from Butternut Creek.

The last cotton mill to be built in the county was at Laurens on the stream which drains Gilbert Lake. This is said to have been erected in 1847 although the land conveyance was not made until 1850. The large stone mill topped by a golden cupola was standing within the memory of older residents.

A factory on Wharton Creek at Burlington Flats made cotton yarn but did no weaving. A large mill was built at Pittsfield in 1832 but its life was brief. It burned in 1847 and was not replaced.

Most of these mills ran full blast through the Civil War period. The story of how the raw cotton got through the Union blockade must await verification of the facts. This has been difficult since descendants of the men involved have been understandably silent on the subject.

With the better transportation afforded by the railroads and with the disappearance of cheap water power, the Otsego mills lost their competitive position and one by one they closed, leaving only the factory at Phoenix in operation. Eventually it too closed down and an era was over.

## DADDY BACON

There were giants on the Hill during the first decade of the century. Certain it is that no other school as small and as young as Oneonta State Normal could boast of a faculty composed of such men as Percy I. Bugbee, Edwin F. Bacon, Charles A. Schumacher, Arthur M. Curtis, Frank Blodgett, Frank G. Sanford and Howard Lyon.

Each of the seven was an expert in his field, could impart his knowledge skilfully and had an unforgettable personality. And not the least of these was Edwin F. Bacon, affectionately called "Daddy", who taught French and German from the day the institution opened in 1889 until a few days before his death in 1910.

Edwin Faxon Bacon was born in Lockport in 1833. He was educated at Illinois State Normal School and Yale University and after a period of study in France and Germany and a successful teaching career in various parts of the country, became in 1889 a member of the first faculty of the new state school in Oneonta. He and Dr. Bugbee were the last survivors of that group.

Professor Bacon (he was too busy studying and teaching to work for a doctorate) had a wide reputation as a teacher of modern languages. Articles from his pen appeared frequently in educational publications and several text books which he wrote were used in many secondary schools and colleges.

"Daddy" Bacon wrote many plays and sketches in English, German and French, some of which were produced by various groups at the school and in the village. He took a keen interest in what went on in the community and was a frequent contributor to the *Star* and the *Herald*, writing his pungent observations under the names of "X Y Z" and "Luke Sharpe".

Local history and geography were beginning to be taught in the grades and to satisfy a demand for teaching materials, Mr. Bacon prepared a manual in manuscript form for use at the Normal. In 1902 he enlarged this and had it printed as a book, complete with illustrations and county and township maps.

"Otsego County: Historical and Geographical", is a very readable book and contains a great deal of valuable information but Edwin Bacon was not primarily an historian. Many of the facts are erroneous and some of his conclusions are at least questionable.

About two thousand persons graduated from ONS while Professor Bacon taught there and each was his friend. His tremendous enthusiasm, his kindliness and his deep understanding endeared him to all who knew him, on or off the Hill.

Edwin Bacon taught far beyond the age at which most men stop working. Fortunately for him and his pupils there was no compulsory retirement age at that time. He boasted that he had not missed a class or an appointment for forty years and it took great persuasion to get him to Fox Hospital when he became ill in December of 1910. There he died after a short illness.

His body lay in state in the Normal parlors and the funeral was held in the school assembly hall with about every clergyman in town taking part. He was buried in Glenwood Cemetery.

Bacon Hall on the new State College campus stands as a memorial to one of the most beloved men who ever taught on Normal Hill.

## *RUNNING WATER*

Shower baths, washing machines, flush toilets — all are so much a part of our daily lives that it is difficult to realize that there are persons now living in Oneonta who can remember when none of these so called necessities of living existed.

There was just as much water in the old days as there is now but each householder had to furnish his own supply, whether from well, spring, or cistern. There were no sanitary sewers and hence no inside plumbing. Water for fire fighting was supplied by five small cisterns scattered about town.

Early in 1876 a group of citizens met to consider building a reservoir and piping the water into the village but it was not until July of 1880 that the Oneonta Water Works was organized, with William W. Snow as president, John Cope as secretary and Marquis L. Keyes as treasurer.

Early the following year a site along Oneonta Creek about two miles above the village was bought and a dam to impound the waters of the stream was started. On June 1, with the reservoir half completed, a cloudburst sent torrents of water down the creek, washing out the masonry and land fill.

A new start was made and in 1882 the reservoir was completed and water let into the mains. At first only a portion of the village was served, the East End district getting its water from a small spring fed reservoir on the Couse farm in the woods just north of Main Street.

The village reservoir covered about ten acres and held twenty million gallons. Oneonta continued to grow and within five years it became evident that the supply of water would soon prove inadequate. It was then planned to use the existing plant as a distributing reservoir and to construct a large storage reservoir two miles above, near the old Richardson sawmill.

About 150 acres of land were purchased. In clearing this, four dwellings, two hop houses, a sawmill, a barn and a carriage house were removed.

The contract was awarded for \$26,100 to a West Troy firm and work was started in 1887. The job took a year and a half but when it was done Oneonta had the largest artificial lake or reservoir owned by any water company or city in the state outside of Greater New York. In 1936 the dam was raised seven feet in height, adding greatly to the capacity of the reservoir.

The upper reservoir now covers about 75 acres and holds 470 million gallons of water. Approximately nine square miles of watersheds feed the two reservoirs, which are connected by an open stream. Several hundred thousand trees have been planted to protect the watersheds.

In 1906 a filter plant with a daily capacity of three million gallons was built at a cost of \$40,000. In 1957 the present plant, one of the finest in the world, was constructed. This will filter nine million gallons in 24 hours.

George I. Wilber had controlled the water company for years and his will gave his majority interest (\$291,250) to the city. The minority stockholders were bought out with the proceeds of a bond issue of about \$200,000 and in 1923 Oneonta became the sole owner of its water system.



## WOODEN ROW BURNS

You have probably heard about the man who, when his house was burning, tossed a mirror out of an upstairs window and then carried a mattress down to the street. According to a bystander, that actually happened during the great Wooden Row fire of December 27, 1908.

This may be just another story but if it is true, the mattress was one of the few articles salvaged from a blaze that destroyed eight buildings, put twelve concerns out of business and made ten families homeless. On the good side, the fire leveled 194 front feet of wooden structures which had been an eyesore and a firetrap for years.

The Wooden Row covered the area on the south side of Main Street between Broad and Chestnut now occupied by the row of yellow brick blocks extending from the Jack and Jill Shop to Turner's Restaurant.

Several landmarks went up in flames. The most westerly building in the row was the stone store built in 1840 by Solon and Collis P. Huntington. In later years a wooden addition was built on the rear. At the time of the fire, Morton's Saloon was on the ground floor with the millinery parlors of the Misses Stringham above.

The three story Arlington Hotel had twenty-four people sleeping in it but all escaped. The Blend block, also of three stories, had George Slade's Drug Store on the ground floor and on the top floor was Blend Hall, where the Catholics of the village met before St. Mary's parish was organized.

One of the buildings housed the Grand Army of the Republic and many priceless records and mementoes belonging to the Civil War veterans were lost. Another landmark destroyed was the restaurant of T. J. (Johnny) Baker, widely known for the quality of its food and drink. This was a favorite haunt of Oneonta's business and professional men.

Other businesses in the row were Campbell's Empire Bakery, Townsend's printing shop, the L. D. Slade newstand, Lyon's Glove Store, Marble's poolroom, the George Thomas Shoe Parlors and the Oneonta Coal Company office.

The fire started in the rear of the bakery in the angle between the back wall and the longer side wall of the Arlington Hotel. It was discovered at 5 a.m. almost simultaneously by a hotel guest and a milkman. By the time the volunteer fire department reached the scene, the flames had raced so rapidly through the tinder-dry buildings that not even the desperate efforts of the firemen could save the row.

By seven o'clock every one of the eight buildings had been leveled. The blocks across the street (the same then as today) were in continual danger. Practically every window was broken by the intense heat and casings and cornices ignited frequently. Smoke and water damage was heavy in the stores of Ronan Brothers, R. W. Murdock, C. C. Colburn, C. O. Biederman, W. W. Darbee and the Oneonta Department Store.

The money losses ran into six figures but there was no loss of life or serious injury. The ruins were soon cleared away and work was started on the row of brick blocks now occupying the site.

## THE CLAN McCRUM

For eighty-seven years the McCrums were as much a part of Oneonta as the land itself, but, as has happened so many times in respect to the pioneers who built the community, the name has vanished. Blocks which they erected and houses which they occupied still exist but no McCrums have lived here for many years.

The McCrum dynasty began in 1838 when William McCrum came here from Hobart, where he was born in 1822 of parents who had emigrated from Armagh, Ireland, in 1806. During the first winter he attended the public school, then taught by Luman Case, in the schoolhouse which stood where Broad Street now meets Main.

In 1840 he began an apprenticeship as a cabinet maker with Robert Hopkins, whose shop stood where the Montgomery Ward store now is on Chestnut Street. In 1847 he became Hopkins' partner and the next year went on his own in a building on Main Street where the eastern half of the Woolworth store is.

William McCrum was married in 1851 to Lydia Ford, a cousin of E. R. Ford, and they set up housekeeping in a small dwelling which stood on what is now the corner of Main and Broad Streets on the site of the brick block which he and E. D. Saunders built in 1873 and which is now owned by Albert Farone.

In 1853 he built a frame structure for his cabinet shop and furniture store on the ground now occupied by Hoffman's. This was a landmark until it was razed years later. He erected a fine residence on Broad Street in 1867 which, with its extensive lawns and gardens, was a showplace for years. It is still standing, behind the Oneonta Diner.

William McCrum was active in every phase of the life of his times. He was a member of the first fire company in the village, captained by Collis P. Huntington, and was a village trustee. An ardent abolitionist, he joined the Republican party when it was organized in 1856 and continued in that political faith throughout his life. He died in 1908, full of years and highly respected for his industry and integrity.

He had three children. Helena, who was the first wife of Henry Saunders, died in 1882. Otto Clark, the older son, joined his father's business in 1875 and Wirt, the younger, when he came of age, the firm name then becoming McCrum and Sons.

Wirt McCrum married Belle Bradley, the daughter of an early Oneonta police chief, and lived in the Broad Street home after his father's demise. Wirt died in 1917.

Clark McCrum married Elizabeth Douglas and built, in 1883, the large brick house at the corner of Center Street and Myrtle Avenue. He was as active in civic affairs as his father, being a village trustee, a charter member of the Oneonta Club and a director of the Wilber National Bank. He had two children, Helene, who married Albert P. Mills and now lives in Arizona, and Douglas, who resides in Florida.

O. C. McCrum died in 1925 and the furniture and undertaking business passed into the hands of a longtime employee, Herbert A. Lewis.

No McCrum now lives in Oneonta but the clan has left a lasting imprint upon the community.

## *BIRTH OF A VILLAGE*

Oneonta can make no claims to antiquity. It is true that the Indian was here two thousand years before the birth of Christ but the white man did not come into the valley to stay until the 18th century and there was no settlement of any size here until the nineteenth.

As a city Oneonta is 53 years old, as a village it is 114. The first incorporation of the village was obtained in 1848. Application was made at June term of the Court of Sessions of Otsego County and on August 15 County Judge James Hyde ordered that an election be held and a vote taken for or against incorporation.

The order named October 14 as the time for such vote and the hotel of John M. Watkins as the place. This hostelry stood on the site of the Stanton block on the northwest corner of Main and Chestnut Streets.

The incorporation of the village was authorized by a vote of 66 to 16. It was said that only one qualified voter within the proposed corporation limits failed to vote—William H. Olin, the man who first proposed the idea. The completed papers all bear the date of October 27, 1848. The village as organized contained 657 acres of land.

The first village election was held on December 2 and resulted in the choice of the following officers: Trustees, E. R. Ford, Hezekiah Watkins, William Bronson, William S. Fritts, Samuel J. Cook; Assessors, John Cutshaw, Elisha Shepherd, Ephraim Hodge; Village Clerk, William H. Olin; Treasurer, Andrew G. Shaw; Collector, John McCraney; Poundmaster, Solon Huntington; Street Commissioners, Collis P. Huntington, Harvey Baker, Hosea A. Hamilton. Mr. Ford was the only candidate getting all votes cast. He was elected president by the trustees.

This incorporation lasted until 1876 when the state legislature passed an act confirming the incorporation under state law. The following year another legislative act extended the boundaries of the village.

The people of Oneonta, finding the charter of 1870 unsatisfactory in many respects, called a public meeting in the fall of 1884 and appointed a committee headed by Harvey Baker, to prepare a new charter. The committee held many sessions and prepared the new charter with great care. This charter, approved by the state legislature on February 23, 1885, was, with some amendments, in force at the time the city charter went into effect on January 1, 1909.

The 1885 charter divided the village into six wards with approximately the same boundaries as at present. It stipulated that two aldermen be elected annually after the first election, thus insuring that a majority of experienced men would always be on the board. The new city charter did not provide for this. We have now gone back to the old system of staggered aldermanic elections, effective January 1, 1962.



## IT COULDN'T HAPPEN

What happened in Cooperstown that sunny July day in 1805 was so utterly fantastic that no novelist or script writer would dare to present it as fiction.

The story concerns a hanging but the culprit was not saved by the sudden appearance of a madly galloping horse, its rider waving a reprieve. What happened was — but we'll forsake the role of journalist for that of story-teller, begin at the beginning and work up to the incredible climax.

Stephen Arnold was a hot tempered school teacher living in the town of Burlington. During the winter of 1804 he whipped to death a six year old foster child, Betsy VanAmburgh, for inability to pronounce correctly the word "gig".

Arnold fled the country after the slaying but was soon captured and returned to Cooperstown for trial. He was quickly convicted of first degree murder and sentenced to be hanged on July 19, 1805.

The brutal nature of the crime had inflamed the people throughout this part of the state and a crowd estimated at twelve thousand persons poured into the village of perhaps five hundred inhabitants.

As the Otsego Journal put it: "Blooming nymphs were there and jolly swains, delicate ladies and spruce gentlemen, fond mothers and affectionate sisters, prattling children and hoary sages, servile slaves and imperious masters."

At noon a procession was formed in front of the court house. First came a wagon bearing the prisoner and guarded by a battalion of light infantry and a company of artillery. The sheriff on horseback preceded a delegation of clergy and other important personages.

To the sound of funeral music the parade passed solemnly down the main street, over the river bridge and to the place of execution on the east bank of the Susquehanna. Here stood a gallows with a coffin at its foot.

Silence fell upon the vast multitude which stretched in every direction in waves of color and movement. A prayer opened the proceedings and then came the address, "a pathetic, concise, and excellently adapted discourse," by the Rev. Isaac Lewis, pastor of the Presbyterian Church. Another prayer followed.

The prisoner seated himself on his coffin for a brief spell and then gave a speech of repentance and warning. The sheriff adjusted the noose about the neck of the wretched man. At this point a palsied old lady, who had been carried to the scene in a rocking chair which was placed upon an improvised platform, rocked so violently that she fell over backward, breaking her neck.

The sheriff stepped forward but instead of springing the trap, he took a paper from his pocket and read a reprieve from Governor Morgan Lewis. Arnold promptly fainted and "the spectators were sadly disappointed and were not slow to give utterance to their feelings."

It developed that the sheriff had had the reprieve in his pocket since nine that morning. He felt that the spectators were entitled to a good show so he played the grisly game as long as he could.

Arnold was never hanged. At the next session of the legislature the death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment.

## GOOD GRAY TEACHER

When Professor Nathaniel N. Bull died in 1898 it might have been said of him: "If you seek his monument, look around you!"

For fifty-seven years the first superintendent of Oneonta schools had been a teacher and there were few native Oneontans who had not been exposed to his effective methods and to the influence of his character and personality.

Nathaniel Bull was born in the town of Oneonta in 1823 of pioneer parents. Strangely enough, in view of the remarkable fund of information which he possessed and his ability to impart it, his formal education was limited.

He attended district school and studied briefly at a Quaker institution in Dutchess County and at the Delaware Literary Institute at Franklin. He began his teaching career at the age of fifteen at Broome, Schoharie County.

Mr. Bull taught one term of public school in Oneonta in 1848. He lived briefly in Oskaloosa, Iowa, and taught again in Oneonta in 1864-65. He then went to Binghamton where he was head of the Lowell Business Institute for some years.

For some time prior to 1867 Oneonta's only public school stood on Grove Street opposite the First Baptist Church (later the Lutheran). There was an Oneonta High School but it was a private affair, run for profit.

On October 29, 1867, the Union Free School, which would teach secondary as well as elementary subjects, was organized and a new building authorized. A plot of land on the site of the present Senior High School was purchased from Timothy Sabin, who lived in what is now the front portion of the Eagles Club.

At that time Academy Street (then called Green) extended only from Chestnut to Grove. The land now occupied by the school cafeteria and playground was then the First Baptist Church graveyard. To provide access to the new school it was necessary to buy a right of way through the cemetery. The bodies were later removed to Riverside Cemetery and the street extended through to Fairview.

Wilbur F. Saxton was the first principal of the Union Free School. When he retired in 1870, Nathaniel Bull returned to Oneonta and replaced him. At that time the school had four teachers and one hundred fifty pupils.

For the next twenty-five years Professor Bull, "the good gray teacher", was to direct education in Oneonta. In 1888 a "system" having been created by the building of the River Street School, Nathaniel Bull was elected superintendent. His daughter, Miss Mary Bull, replaced him as principal.

Professor Bull served under eight presidents of the Board of Education: Silas Sullivan, D. S. Miller, Rev. H. H. Allen, S. S. Burnside, Warren Gillette, D. J. Yager, W. A. E. Tompkins and Albert Morris.

Nathaniel Bull retired on January 1, 1895, after building the school system to a total of twenty-one teachers and nine hundred pupils. He died on August 8, 1898, and was buried in the Quaker section of the West Oneonta Cemetery.

Of his passing the Oneonta Herald remarked: "More deeply, perhaps, than any death which ever before occurred in Oneonta will the demise of Prof. Nathaniel N. Bull be felt and regretted."

## A WILDERNESS TRAGEDY

If Hannah Cooper's horse had not shied at a barking dog that fall day in 1800, the Otsego County belle might very well have become the young nation's first lady.

At the time of her tragic death Judge William Cooper's oldest (and favorite) daughter was said to have been engaged to a young army lieutenant named William Henry Harrison, who forty years later was to become the ninth president of the United States.

About midway between Morris and Gilbertsville and slightly to the west of the road stands a slender stone shaft surrounded by a paling fence which marks the exact spot where Miss Cooper was killed.

The sister of the novelist James Fenimore Cooper was preparing to leave Coopers-town to spend the winter in Washington with her father. On the morning of September 10, 1800, she set out with her brother Richard to say goodbye to the daughters of General Jacob Morris at Morris Manor. They were on horseback since this was about the only way of travel in the wilderness.

Otsego Hall, the Cooper mansion, was about twenty-four miles from the Morris home. The road, which was little better than a bridle path through the woods, went through Oaksville to Burlington Green and thence down Butternut Creek to Louisville (now Morris) and the general's home.

When the party was nearly at its destination Hannah's horse shied at the noise of men threshing oats with flails on a platform near the road. She kept her seat and had the thoroughbred nearly quieted down when a dog ran barking out of a nearby house. This time the girl was thrown violently to the ground, her head striking the base of a tree. She was killed almost instantly.

Her body was returned to Otsego Hall and the first Episcopal funeral to be held in Cooperstown was conducted by the noted Father Daniel Nash.

It is not known positively that Hannah Cooper was betrothed to "Tippecanoe" Harrison but many claimed that she was. It is known that Harrison visited the place of her death several times.

There is no doubt, however, that this beautiful twenty-three year old girl had many admirers. The marble shaft which marks the spot of the tragedy was the tribute of one swain, J. H. Imlay, who also wrote the eulogy on the south side of the monument. The other inscriptions were the work of two of her girl friends. The shaft, made in Philadelphia, was set up in 1801.

Another admirer was Moss Kent, father of the great Chancellor Kent of New Jersey. Still another, this one elderly and a family man, was Colonel Richard Cary, at one time on General Washington's staff.

When this gallant Virginian came to die his last request was "Bury me beside Hannah Cooper; she was the best woman I ever knew and my only chance of Paradise is getting in on her skirts."

However shocking this request may have been to his wife and family, they respected his dying wish and Colonel Cary lies in Christ churchyard in Cooperstown in the next grave to Hannah Cooper.



## JAMES A. DEWAR

The word "philanthropist" literally means "lover of man", a perfect definition. No man who ever lived in Oneonta better deserved that title than James A. Dewar, affectionately known to all as "Gus". He never forgot that his origins were humble and his approach to every man was kindly and understanding.

Gus Dewar had a deep sense of the responsibilities of wealth and his gifts to institutions and causes were many. Furthermore, he saw to it that his money would continue to do good far into the future. The result is the James A. and Jessie Smith Dewar Foundation, which has done so much in so many ways.

James Augustus Dewar was born in 1872 in a house on the site of the Victory Market which had been the lifelong home of his mother, Luna Bennett. His father, John T. Dewar, a native of Prince Edward Island, was a slater, tinsmith and plumber.

He attended the Oneonta schools, leaving high school at the age of 16 to work in the postoffice, where he was employed for many years, rising to the position of assistant postmaster, which he held for 18 years.

Being greatly interested in automobiles he sold them as a sideline. Following his resignation from the postal service in 1921 he acquired the Cadillac agency which he conducted successfully for years, later switching to the Chrysler. In 1927 he built the brick block on Broad Street just below the YMCA as a sales place.

Mr. Dewar was an avid sportsman and in his younger days owned a string of trotters. He was a charter member of the Country Club and was president from 1929 until his death. He was instrumental in enlarging the course to 18 holes and it was he who brought the present professional, Frank Grygiel, to Oneonta.

He was president of the Riverside Cemetery Association and a director of the Citizens National Bank. A 50 year Mason, he was also an Elk and a Rotarian. During World War II he gave devoted service as a member of the local OPA board.

Mr. Dewar was married in 1907 to Jessie Smith, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Smith. Mrs. Dewar is possessed of the same deep humanity as was her husband and much of her own wealth has gone into various projects, together with funds from the Dewar Foundation.

Gus Dewar was a shrewd investor and his holdings grew rapidly in value. He had often discussed with his wife the creation of a foundation so that his money might work for good in the years to come. Following his death the Dewar Foundation was organized. The fine residence hall and cafeteria at Hartwick College and the surgical wing at Fox Hospital are but examples of what the Foundation has done, and the end is not yet.

It is almost impossible to convey to one who did not know him the color and flavor of Gus Dewar's personality. He had a delightful sense of humor and his fund of stories was inexhaustible. He never lost the common touch even when he became a man of means.

James A. Dewar died in 1947 and was buried in Riverside Cemetery but his good works live on in the foundation which he inspired.

## ROAD OF CONTROVERSY

Two crumbling stone abutments flanking Route 7 just west of what was once the hamlet of Cooperstown Junction are about the only visible remains of the southern end of the Cooperstown and Charlotte Valley railroad, a line with a history as turbulent as any in the annals of railroading.

These foundations once supported the bridge which carried the C. & C. V. over the Delaware and Hudson tracks on its way from Davenport Center to Cooperstown. This part of the railroad was abandoned in 1903 but for years thereafter was used as a freight car storage track.

The twenty mile line was tiny but every rod was loaded with dynamite, which nearly wrecked Cooperstown, destroying friendships, poisoning social life, corrupting voters, depressing business and causing bitter battles in the courts.

It all started with the building of the Albany and Susquehanna from Albany to Oneonta. Cooperstown wanted a branch line to connect with it. The town of Otsego was bonded for \$200,000 and Middlefield, just across the river, for \$50,000. Individuals subscribed \$58,400 and the road was built from the county seat to Cooperstown Junction, opening for business in 1869 as the Cooperstown and Susquehanna Valley Railroad.

Andrew Shaw was elected president and for some years things went smoothly, with David Wilber of Milford (father of George I.) becoming a strong influence in the management. In 1884 Judge Edwin Harris became president and undertook the task of getting rid of Shaw and Wilber as directors, claiming that favoritism in freight rates had developed.

The struggle for control of town meetings, where the railroad commissioners (who elected the directors) were chosen, became bitter, with much buying of votes by both sides. Harris prevailed and Shaw and Wilber were ousted.

Wilber was a man whose resources matched his determination and he countered by paralleling the railroad with a stage line of horses and wagons called the West Shore Road, which handled freight between Cooperstown and the Junction at rates lower than the railroad offered.

By 1887 Harris was in complete control and the road entered upon an even more stormy period. Against the bitter opposition of the former directors and their friends, the road was pushed on to Davenport Center where it would make connection with the Ulster and Delaware line.

With opposition building, Harris and his cohorts pulled a fast one. They organized a new company called the Cooperstown and Charlotte Valley Railroad and leased the Cooperstown and Susquehanna line to it. This caused a terrific outcry and started years of feuding between the two factions.

The opponents of the railroad management denounced the transaction as a fraud and claimed that the directors, for their own benefit, had stolen the road from its rightful owners, the citizens of Otsego and Middlefield. The controversy split Cooperstown wide open and caused many lawsuits, all won by Harris and company.

In 1903 the Delaware and Hudson acquired control of the line and closed the Junction to Davenport Center section but continued the Cooperstown run.

## ANCESTOR OF IBM

The time recording device which postmaster Harlow E. Bundy was trying out in his office in 1888 was pretty crude and no one who saw it could possibly imagine that it would start a chain of events which would make millionaires of several Oneontans and enrich many others.

When we consider IBM we think of George W. Fairchild, who put the company together, and of Thomas J. Watson, who built it into the giant that it is today. Probably few have ever heard of Harlow Bundy and yet he was the man who saw the great possibilities in the gimmick and had the courage and the tenacity to make a dream come true.

This strange contraption, with part of its mechanism housed in a cigar box, was to become the foundation stone upon which the vast IBM empire with its hundreds of intricate and almost magical products, was to rise.

Harlow E. Bundy was born in Auburn in 1856. As a young man he came to Oneonta to live with his uncle, L. L. Bundy, a prominent attorney who lived where Bresee's now stands. Harlow went to Hamilton College and upon graduation began the study of law in his uncle's office.

He was admitted to the bar in 1878 and immediately joined forces with his uncle in the law firm of Bundy & Bundy. In 1882 he was married to Julia Ford, granddaughter of the pioneer, E. R. Ford.

Bundy met George Fairchild, then foreman of the Oneonta Herald printshop, and the men became fast friends. Together they inaugurated the Star Lecture Course, bringing to Oneonta such famous speakers as Wendell Phillips, Josh Billings, Mary Livermore, Theodore Tilton, John B. Gough and other stars of that golden era of rostrum greats.

In 1887 Bundy was appointed postmaster, the office being in the old Central Hotel block where the Citizens National bank is today. At about this time his brother Willard, an inventive genius but apparently with no business sense, invented the time recorder which Harlow tried out with his employees.

Sensing a great future for the invention, Bundy moved to Binghamton and formed the Bundy Time Recording Company for the manufacture of the device. The company prospered (sales being over one hundred recorders a month in 1892) and soon capital was needed for expansion. Bundy turned to his old friend, George Fairchild, who made an initial investment of eight thousand dollars and became a director.

The company was soon reorganized as the International Time Recording Company and a factory was built in Endicott. Bundy moved to the busy village and erected a fine home which is now the Endicott public library.

Computing machine and scale companies were brought into a merger with ITR and the Computing-Tabulating-Recording Company was formed with Fairchild as president and Bundy as vice-president. This, greatly expanded, is the IBM of today.

Bundy was in failing health, however, and soon after the merger he relinquished his active interest and moved to California. He died in Pasadena in 1916, not knowing what an industrial giant he had spawned.



## JOHN HARTWICK

John Christopher Hartwick was a stubborn man. His will was made long before his death but even though he finally lost most of his estate he refused to change the document. He was told that the will was not a legal instrument but he still would not alter it.

It was clear that he wanted to leave his estate for the building of a theological seminary but he had named Jesus Christ as his chief heir and that created a legal problem. No heirs came forward so the will was probated.

If this man, who gave his name to a township, three villages, a theological seminary and Oneonta's fine college, were living today, he would probably be called a "character". He was a man of great erudition and piety but also of great eccentricity. For instance, he had an antipathy toward women and would jump a fence rather than meet one face to face.

Johannus Christophorus Hartwig (the German spelling) was born in the duchy of Saxe-Gotha in 1714. We know little of his early life but there is evidence that he was educated at the University of Halle. He was ordained a Lutheran minister in London in 1745 and sailed soon thereafter for America.

For twelve years Pastor Hartwick served several Palatine congregations along the Hudson River. It would appear that he was not popular as a preacher. His sermons were learned and were long and difficult of comprehension. He was strict, harsh and rigid of manner. According to one contemporary: "He did not have the talent for visiting and attracting people . . . he would rather go fishing and bird hunting."

While in the Hudson valley Hartwick became acquainted with many Indians. He became strongly attached to them and they to him. In 1754 he bought from the Mohawks for \$250 a tract of thirty-six square miles in what is now Hartwick township in Otsego county. In 1761 the King issued letters patent for this land to Hartwick and ten other persons, seven of whom gave him their shares.

It was Hartwick's intention to start a school where persons could be trained to convert the Indians, and to colonize the land under strict spiritual rules. He had little business ability and was absent from the colony much of the time so that things did not run too smoothly.

In 1791 he appointed William Cooper to manage the estate. The latter was a businessman and the religious life of the settlers meant little to him. Through a lease agreement Cooper eventually became owner of most of the land.

During the last years of his life Hartwick preached in many places and spent little time on his dwindling estate. He died in 1796 and was buried in the Lutheran Cemetery at Germantown. Two years later his body was removed to Albany and interred in the chancel of Ebenezer (now First) Lutheran church. When the structure was rebuilt in 1816, the body was removed to a city cemetery. Years later it was again moved and today nobody knows where rest the bones of this strange but brilliant man.

## HARTWICK SEMINARY

If John Christopher Hartwick had not died when he did it is probable that there would be no college bearing his name today. In his last years his estate dwindled rapidly and soon there would have been no funds to create Hartwick Seminary, out of which the college grew.

As it was, it was nip and tuck. Before a building could be erected one of the executors died a bankrupt and the portion of the estate entrusted to his care was totally lost.

In 1797 the executors decided to carry out Hartwick's wishes by establishing a theological seminary and academy. Within two years the institution was a reality but it existed simultaneously in four different places.

The theological department (the first of the Lutheran denomination in America) was in New York, the elementary division in Cooperstown and the secondary department in Albany while the library was in Schenectady. This condition went on for ten or fifteen years but the seminary still had no permanent home.

Cooperstown wanted the school and offered a building. Schoharie county put in a strong bid. Ebenezer Lutheran Church in Albany had long claimed a part of the estate and even went so far in 1804 as to lay the foundation for a building on the Lutheran Cemetery grounds near the State Capitol.

It was finally decided to put the school where it belonged — in Hartwick township. Five acres of land in what is now the village of Hartwick Seminary were bought on October 12, 1811, and the foundation was laid the following year.

Red tape held up construction but finally in 1815 the school was ready for use. It was a two story brick building, forty-eight feet long and thirty-five deep, containing eight classrooms with a kitchen and dining room in the basement.

The school opened with nineteen male students. The building at this time was not big enough to provide living quarters for the students, who stayed in private homes and in the thirteen room house of the principal, Rev. Ernest L. Hazelius. They paid about three dollars per week for "Board, bedding, lodging, washing and mending."

In 1816 the institution was incorporated by the legislature as "The Hartwick Seminary". The charter provided that a majority of the trustees be Lutheran clergymen or laymen. In 1834 the curriculum was expanded to provide a three year course based on the classics, making it practically a junior college.

In 1852 the Seminary was made coeducational, becoming one of the first such schools in the country. During the next year a Normal course was started to train teachers for the public schools. Thus at Hartwick, Otsego county's teacher training program was inaugurated, supported by state funds and antedating the founding of the Oneonta Normal school by thirty-five years.

In 1869 the building was considerably enlarged. Year after year the famous school continued its good work and many of its graduates attained eminence and fame.

The opening of Hartwick College in 1928 spelled doom for the Seminary and in the early '40s the school suspended operations and the real property was conveyed to the college.

An era of Lutheran education had ended.

## HARTWICK COLLEGE

When the Lutheran Synod met in New York early in 1926 there was one clear issue before it: either raise \$500,000 for a program of expansion at Hartwick Seminary or abandon the institution. There was no alternative.

In an open letter to the Synod, Dr. Charles R. Myers, Seminary president, had stated that the school could not run much longer under prevailing conditions and that he must resign unless the money was raised. His dream was of an eventual campus development that would extend from the old building down to the Susquehanna and with a four year college course in effect.

On October 8, 1926, the Synod voted unanimously to back the plan and Hartwick College was born. It was at first assumed that the child would grow up at Hartwick Seminary but in 1927 the Chamber of Commerce suggested that Oneonta be the home of the new institution of higher learning.

Negotiations ensued and finally an offer was made under which the city pledged to give \$200,000 and a suitable tract of land if the college were located in Oneonta and if the Synod would raise at least \$400,000.

On March 10, 1927, the Synod, meeting in Oneonta, accepted the offer. The city's pledge was over subscribed in about a week, 110 acres on Oyaron Hill were purchased for a campus and Hartwick College was on its way.

The big Walling mansion at the corner of Main Street and Walling Avenue was rented as temporary quarters and plans were made to open in September, 1928. Dr. Myers was chosen as the first president and Dr. Olaf Norlie of Luther College in Iowa was elected dean.

While Dr. Norlie was securing a faculty, Pastors Philip M. Luther and Robert J. VanDeusen were in the field getting students. It was thought that twenty-five could be expected to enroll for the first semester. To everyone's amazement 102 young men and women, 98 of them full time freshmen, applied for admission.

By the end of the first week the enrollment had climbed to 175 and more teachers had to be hired. By the end of the semester the enrollment was 235, many of them special students but students nevertheless.

On June 26, 1928, ground was broken for the first building on the new campus. On December 2, 1929, the college moved into the building to the great relief of all, since the Walling house was so crowded that night classes had to be held. The structure was intended as a science hall but it was also equipped with a library, chapel and gymnasium so that the college could have a normal existence until more buildings could be financed and built.

Dr. Charles W. Leitzell succeeded Dr. Myers as president in 1929 and served until 1939 when he retired and was replaced by Dr. Henry J. Arnold, who served until 1953. He was succeeded by Dr. Miller A. F. Ritchie and the latter, in 1959, by the present incumbent, Dr. Frederick M. Binder.

Hartwick has had a steady, solid growth. The present enrollment is about one thousand students of various faiths and cultural backgrounds. A well planned building program has dotted the campus with dormitories and halls of learning.

Academic standards are constantly being raised and the future looks bright for an already fine institution.



## HOMER FOLKS HOSPITAL

When the new state tuberculosis hospital high in the West Street hills admitted its first patient on December 18, 1935, probably Dr. Ralph Horton, the director, did not dare to hope that in less than thirty years the Great White Plague would no longer be regarded as a savage killer but rather as a malady which, although still dangerous, is susceptible of positive cure in a fraction of the time it formerly took.

Nor could he have foreseen the part the institution he was to head so successfully until his death in 1959, would play in the war against the dread disease. We wonder how many Oneontans realize that many curative techniques have been developed at Homer Folks Hospital and that it is regarded as one of the finest institutions of its kind in the world.

The hospital came into being as the result of a special study of health needs made by a committee appointed by Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1939. The next year the legislature authorized the acquisition of hospital sites. Oneonta was chosen as a place for a tuberculosis hospital and a portion of the George Ellis farm on upper West Street was purchased.

Ground was broken on October 26, 1932. Two years later Dr. Horton and Harold Dunning, the steward, came to Oneonta to prepare for the hospital opening. Not a building was finished and there were no roads on the grounds. They moved their families into partly finished staff houses, improvised an office in the power house and set to work.

The hospital was opened on December 18, 1935, and was formally dedicated by Governor Herbert H. Lehman on July 9, 1936. It was named "Homer Folks" after the secretary of the State Charities Aid Association who had been the aggressive sponsor of many general health, tuberculosis and social welfare laws.

The eleven buildings which originally constituted the hospital complex cost approximately one million dollars while equipment and furnishings come to about one-quarter of that sum. The construction took place during the depression and the WPA did some of the grading, seeding and landscaping.

The hospital is staffed with about 250 doctors, nurses, attendants and administrative and maintenance personnel. The patient capacity is 250.

Since the day it opened, Homer Folks has pioneered in the development of techniques for the prevention, arrest and cure of tuberculosis. It has been especially pre-eminent in the field of surgery.

The first surgeon was the famous Dr. Ethan Flagg Butler. He was followed by Dr. Max Chamberlain, now practicing in New York and regarded as one of the best chest surgeons in the country. Dr. A. M. Skinner, long the surgeon, had an outstanding career. Dr. E. H. Kerper, the radiologist, has few peers as an interpreter of chest x-rays. The present director is Dr. Frederick Beck, a highly skilled administrator.

Since Homer Folks was built, the number of state tuberculosis hospitals has dropped from thirteen to three and the cost of the program has been cut in half. Oneontans can be proud of the fact that our Homer Folks has been in the vanguard of the fight which made this remarkable achievement possible.

## MYSTERY HIS MEAT

Willard Huntington Wright, novelist, philosopher and art critic, had much in common with S. S. VanDine, mystery story writer and creator of Philo Vance, one of the most famous detectives in history.

Their fathers were born in Oneonta and each writer had spent much time in the City of the Hills. Their literary styles were quite different but it was plain to see that each was a man of culture and learning.

Perhaps it is not so remarkable that these men were so much alike since, as you may already know, they were one and the same person. S. S. VanDine was the pseudonym adopted by Willard Huntington Wright when he forsook learned writing and turned to the entertainment field.

Wright was born in 1888 in Charlottesville, Va. His father was Archibald D. Wright who was born in the old Dietz-Bundy house which stood on the Bresee store site. He was named after his father's boyhood friend, Willard V. Huntington, son of Solon and brother of the illustrious Henry E. Huntington.

After studies at several colleges, Wright entered the writing field. His first published work was a book of verse, which he followed with scores of learned treatises on esthetics, philosophy and literary and art criticism. His reputation in the last field was widespread.

Just prior to World War I he spent several years abroad, collaborating with H. L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan on "Europe After 8:15", a study of the night life in foreign capitals.

In 1916 Wright wrote his first novel, "A Man of Promise". Its sale was small although it was acclaimed as the "Great American Novel" by such critics as Mencken, Burton Rascoe and James Gibbons Huneker.

What makes the book of interest hereabouts is that the locale is beyond doubt Oneonta. The description of "Greenwood", where the action occurs, fits Oneonta to a tee. The author had spent much time in the village visiting two maiden aunts and is reputed to have done much of his writing here. Perhaps the book was penned in the old colonial house on River Street next to the Salvation Army site where lived the Misses Bertha and Julia Wright. The latter was a teacher in the Oneonta schools.

In 1923 Wright suffered a nervous breakdown and was hospitalized for about two years. He was allowed to read only detective stories. As he went through book after book and pondered its contents, he came to the conclusion that here was a profitable and not too difficult field of writing.

In 1926 "The Benson Murder Case" was published under the pen name of S. S. VanDine. It was followed by eleven other crisply told, intricately plotted tales. All were best sellers and they brought him more money than he had earned during his entire prior writing career.

The featured detective was Philo Vance, a languid, supercilious, erudite individual with amazing powers of deduction. The books are all out of print but Philo Vance is enshrined with such other greats as Sherlock Holmes, Hercule Poirot and Nero Wolfe.

Willard Huntington Wright, and with him S. S. VanDine, died in 1939.

## SUMMER FUN

Day follows day, months go by and the years increase but boyhood (and girlhood, too) remains the same.

Fashions in amusement change and customs alter but what the boy of 1963 was looking forward to as the summer days drew near was the same as that anticipated by the lad of 1863 or 1903 — FUN. Let's see what the boy of a half century or more ago had ahead of him.

In the first decade of the century Regents examinations stood between the seventh or eighth grader and the pleasures to come. As we recall it, these state tests were given in spelling, geography, English, physiology, arithmetic and American history. After these hurdles were cleared (or tripped over), came the June Play, a festival held at the Normal in connection with graduation from the Primary and Intermediate Departments.

At last all that was over and the summer lay ahead. In this connection remember that in those days there was no organized recreation or supervised youth activities.

There were no junior baseball leagues. In fact there was no place to play ball except on the streets and in vacant lots. There were no public tennis courts and no swimming pool. The Boy Scout movement had not yet reached Oneonta. A kid took his fun where he found it, but find it he did.

Swimming was popular but facilities were limited. There was no public swimming pool and no supervision. Electric Lake at East End, the Normal reservoir and a pool in the upper reaches of Silver Creek were used but the "swimmin' holes" in the river got the most play. There was the Oar and the Willow, the Strawberry and Black Bridges. With no guards it was dangerous sport and once in a while a boy was drowned.

Our gang on Walnut Street had an Indian club called the Revised Order of Quoians. You started in as a Paleface and worked up through the grades of Brave and Warrior to Chief. The ruling clique was called the Black Circle.

The Table Rocks were the gang's favorite haunt and visits there were frequent. There was lots to do in this kids' paradise and sometimes we took a lunch and stayed all day.

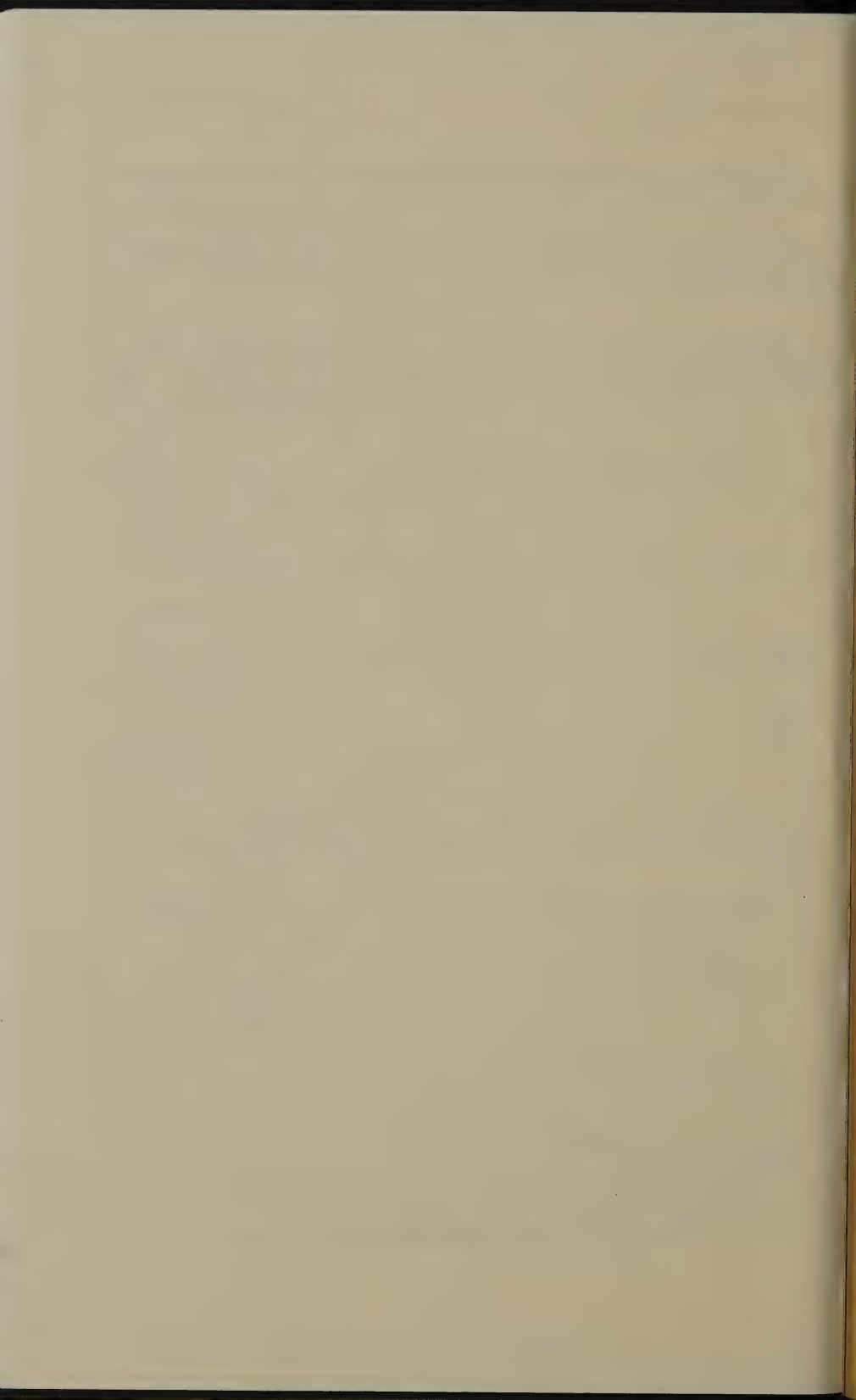
Baseball was the most popular sport. Pitch and catch was played hour after hour and when there were enough boys around, there were games on our diamond in the middle of Walnut Street. Traffic was no problem but the street watering cart caused many postponements on account of wet grounds.

A broken window a day in season was about par for the course. You went to the father involved and admitted your guilt but that was about all that happened because he knew that probably the next day his young hopeful would break some glass in your home, thus canceling the debt.

There was little opportunity to play tennis. The only good court in town was on the Normal grounds where the Bugbee School now is and grownups used it most of the time. The courts back of the YMCA and the First Presbyterian church were generally in poor shape.

During the long evenings we would play Kick the Stick and Duck on a Rock under the corner street light. At about nine o'clock would come the parental summons to head for home and bed. Tomorrow would be another day.











# In Old Oneonta



VOL. 3, 1964

EDWIN R. MOORE















# IN OLD ONEONTA

BY

Edwin R. Moore

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## FOREWORD

We present Volume Three of *IN OLD ONEONTA* in the hope that you will find the sketches therein entertaining and conducive of a better understanding of the events and the people responsible for the development of this and neighboring communities.

When we started writing these stories four years ago the study and presentation of local history was an avocation. Today this and allied activities occupy most of our waking hours. Three books have resulted and another is being planned. Considerable research has been done on a comprehensive history of Oneonta and some private projects have been undertaken.

From all this have come innumerable speaking engagements and a correspondence with former Oneontans and others in nearly half the states which has been at times rather burdensome but withal pleasant, since it has put us in touch again with friends with whom we have not been in contact for years.

It has not been easy work but it has been most rewarding and we are not speaking now of money. We would like to think that our work has given some pleasure to others. We feel that perhaps our talks with school children and older students have been helpful. And then there is the thought that we may have contributed somewhat to knowledge which could be profitable to future generations.

In addition, it has been fun. We love Oneonta, we are fond of history and we like to write. When you do what you enjoy, you are never bored and work never becomes drudgery.

We wish to express our profound thanks to all who have given help in the preparation of these volumes or have encouraged us in our project.

EDWIN R. MOORE

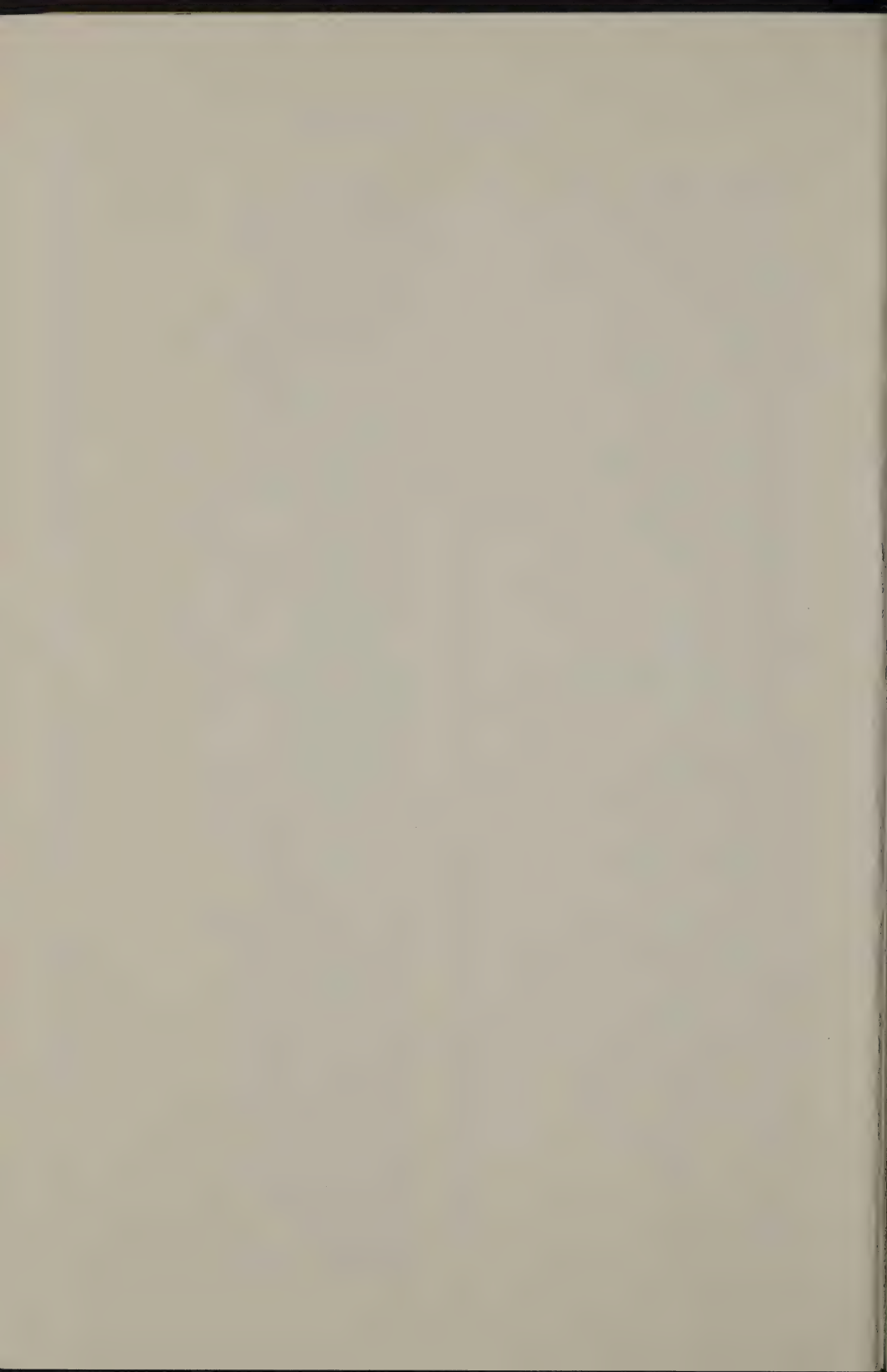
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## MATTERS TONSORIAL

Back in the old days, when a man grew a mustache he grew a mustache. There were none of these tiny baseball affairs (nine on a side); the foliage on our forbears' upper lips was rank and luxuriant. And then there were the chin whiskers—imperials and spade beards, as well as the side adornments such as burnsides and dundrearies.

The owners of these hirsute gardens did what pruning they could but the real horticulturist, the man who kept the grass cut and the hedges trimmed, was the barber. Nowadays the tonsorial artist works mostly from the brow up but before safety and electric razors were invented the face was his province.

Today the barber doesn't do enough shaving to keep his hand in but there was a time when the razor was his principal tool. Generations of Americans shaved with straight razors but you had to know how to use this lethal instrument. Furthermore, the stropping and honing which was needed to keep an edge was a fine art. The result was that the average male frequented the barber shop much more than at present.

The barber shop of today looks much like its counterpart of yesteryear but there are differences. The shaving mugs which lined the walls of the old shop are gone. Back in the horse and buggy days every up and coming citizen had his own cup with his name or some symbolic device painted on it and his own brush and soap. No community shaving mug for him!

The proliferation of oils and unguents, of tonics and greasy kid stuffs that now grace the back bar was absent. There was a bottle or two of unlabelled hair tonic, a jar of pomade and bay rum in abundance.

Originally the barber was also the town surgeon and the red and white striped pole that once marked the tonsorial parlor meant that blood was let within. It would be most unkind to say that even after the razor replaced the scalpel the red stuff still flowed upon occasion. Remember the styptic pencil with which the barber repaired the damage he had wrought?

Hundreds of barbers have come and gone in Oneonta over the years. The most ancient whom we can recall was Billy Lakin, a Civil War veteran whose shop was downstairs in the Westcott block. George Reynolds had a shop for years in the basement of the Hotel Oneonta. His brother Smith worked with him when he wasn't evangelizing.

Lewis Thurston held forth on Broad Street under the Saunders block. And then there were Charlie Edmunds and Art Ingerham; Frank Sharts, Norris Ogden and Homer DeMarse; Claude Champlin and Herman Davenport, not to mention Les Hopkins and a man named Wallace.

The patriarch of today's crop of white coated gentlemen is Anthony Chicorelli, who has been wielding the shears and clippers in the same location, 1 South Main Street, for over half a century.

Life and Look have replaced the Police Gazette as reading matter and the shoe shine chair in the corner is gone. The atmosphere is much more antiseptic than of yore but the cry of "next gentleman" is still heard. The chances are, however, that today you'll get your work done sitting up, not lying down.

## HOP PICKING TIME

At first the pace had been leisurely but now they were working at top speed. The boxes were nearly full and the pickers wanted to complete the job before the weight of the top layers crushed those below and the level sank. But the singing continued. A hymn had just been finished and the happy crew was starting one of the sentimental ballads of the period.

It was hop picking time in Otsego County in any year from near 1800 to well beyond the turn of the century. There are many oldtimers who look back with nostalgia to those days in early September when friends and neighbors gathered in the hopyards to earn a little pin money and enjoy a week or so of fun.

There was a time when Otsego County was the banner hop producing region in the United States. In 1869 for instance, New York State produced ninety per cent of the hops grown in this country and over a third of this harvest came from Otsego. The hop, which gives beer its flavor, was a very important agricultural product until about 1880.

New hop raising districts came into being in the far west at about that time, providing serious competition for New York. Production began to tail off but hops continued to be grown until well into the new century. Blue mold finally killed the industry.

It is not known when hops were first raised here but as early as 1769 the traveler Richard Smith had reported finding wild hops which could be used without cultivation. Certain it is that small crops had been produced for many years before hops became a major agricultural pursuit in the 1840s.

Hop raising was not an easy task. It took capital and much tedious labor. Planting was difficult and there was no yield until the second year. The vines, which were trained to climb cords attached to long poles, had to be pruned, cultivated, fertilized and protected against insects and disease. The plants would yield for from eight to ten years when the whole process had to be repeated.

The big yards used itinerant labor for picking but on the smaller farms the job was done by friends and neighbors. Five people made a crew. Four wooden boxes, each holding ten bushels, would be placed in a rectangle and a table put in the middle on the near corners. The hop vines were put on this table by the box tender and the other four workers would pluck the hops from the vines and throw them into his or her box.

When a box was filled the cry of "sacker" would go up and the yard boss would come and empty the hops into a large sack. They were then dried in the hop kiln and baled. Some yards sold directly to the brewers while others disposed of their crops to brokers. During our youth there were three firms of such brokers in Oneonta.

Quantities of hops were grown in Schoharie County and there were a few yards in Delaware but Otsego was the big hop area. The yards were mostly in the north and central sections of the county.

Hop picking time was one of high festival. Old friends were greeted and new ones made. There were socials and barn dances to lighten the hard work. It was a season which those who once shared it will never forget.

## MR. WILBER'S BANK

In the days when all local news was set by hand, newspaper editors were not inclined to go overboard when writing about any event, so the Herald probably felt that it was covering the situation adequately when, in 1873, it said of the founding of the Wilber National Bank:

"David Wilber has arrived and so has his bank. Business will be commenced in a few days."

Commonly only George I. Wilber is thought of in connection with the start and early operation of the institution which bears the family name. Little is said of the father, David Wilber, yet here was a very remarkable man.

In the two decades before the Civil War and in the years immediately after, the name of David Wilber loomed large in the annals of the village of Milford. He owned much land, had a big hand in the railroad pie and pretty much controlled the growing and marketing of hops in the vicinity.

During the War between the States David Wilber was extensively engaged in the purchase of raw cotton to feed the many mills in the county. The question of how much of this cotton was contraband is beside the point. The mills needed the stuff and Wilber supplied it.

David also owned a hop brokerage business and a private bank in Milford. When the railroad reached Oneonta in 1865 he sensed that this community held much the brighter business future for him. So, early in 1873, he moved his hop business and bank here, setting up shop in half of Walter Brown's hardware store in the new block at the corner of Main and Dietz.

The business of "David Wilber's Bank" steadily increased and in May of 1874 the Wilber National Bank was chartered and opened for business on the twelfth of the next month. David Wilber was the first president and George I. the cashier. E. A. Scramling as teller completed the staff.

The father's duties as congressman kept him out of the village for long periods during which George I. was the virtual president. When David died in 1890 the son became the chief officer, continuing in that post for over thirty years.

The bank was as dear to George I. Wilber as life itself and most of his waking hours were spent in bettering its service and strengthening its position. In time it became one of the strongest banks in the state and has continued so.

The bank has been in six locations during its ninety-one year history. The present beautiful banking house was erected in 1930. In 1953 the Milford National Bank was acquired by the Wilber Bank and the Schenevus National Bank was taken over the next year.

It has been said that an institution is but the lengthened shadow of one man. If it can be said that the Wilber National Bank is the shadow of George I. Wilber, it must be added that the shadow was a substantial one and did not fade away after its maker walked in the sun for the last time.

The Wilber National Bank's resources total nearly twenty-three millions of dollars. That's a pretty good shadow to be cast by any one man or group of men.



## WORCESTER'S PAST

The grim destiny of death by violence seemed to be the lot of the Garfield men. President James A. Garfield was assassinated soon after he took office; his father died of burns suffered while fighting a forest fire; his grandfather succumbed to smallpox at an early age; and his great-grandfather was killed by a falling tree.

The ancestors of the twentieth president of the United States were Otsego County folk and were among the first settlers in the town of Worcester. The Garfield farm was at the eastern end of Worcester village and is identified by a New York State historical marker.

Solomon Garfield, great-grandfather of the president, was a Revolutionary soldier who came to Worcester from Westminster, Mass., in 1790, when the area was still a part of the town of Cherry Valley. Both he and his son, Thomas, the president's grandfather, died in Worcester and were buried in a cemetery on the site of the Bank of Worcester. James A. Garfield's father, Abram, was born in Worcester in 1799. Evidently "hungry for the horizon", in 1820 he moved to Ohio, where the future president was born.

The town of Worcester was formed in 1797 and then embraced, in addition to its present territory, what are now the towns of Decatur, Maryland and Westford. They were set off from Worcester in 1808.

Prominent among the pioneers of the town was Silas Crippen. When he arrived in 1788 the area was a dense wilderness, with not a road nor even a path through the forest. He cleared a large farm in the section now known as Tuscan, built the first gristmill in the town in 1790 and the first sawmill at about the same time.

Other names appearing in the early township records are Bigelow, Chase, Dumont, Shaw, Bardwell, Ingalls, Russ, Becker, Champion, Flint, Waterman, Stever, Todd, Tainter and Caryl.

Until the Civil War period there were only about a dozen houses in the area now occupied by the village. The early settlers established themselves in Brighton, about a mile above, and in Tuscan, approximately the same distance below. In these hamlets were sawmills, blacksmith shops and gristmills. In the early days the present village site was in the George Hyde Clarke grant and it was difficult to acquire land there.

With the coming of the Albany and Susquehanna Railroad (now the D.&H.) in 1865 the situation changed. Factions in Brighton and Tuscan had wanted the railroad station in their communities. Another group wanted the station midway between. This faction won and the first depot was erected on the site of the present station. About this time the Clarke land became available.

The railroad brought growth and prosperity to the village. The growing of hops became a thriving business in the vicinity and gave rise to allied industries, such as the manufacture of hop boxes and kilns. When hop growing declined, the growing and marketing of potatoes took over.

Worcester is no longer an industrial community but still remains what it has always been, a most pleasant place in which to live.

## ONEONTA'S BEST

As we ate breakfast the other morning in the coffee shop of the Hotel Oneonta, we thought of the changes in our surroundings which the years had brought. We went back in memory a half century to when the building was bright and new and was the pride and joy of every citizen.

We thought of the huge dining room which could seat several hundred people, of the spacious lobby filled with easy chairs and potted plants and of the big ballroom on the top floor where so many social events were held.

But time marches on and change walks with it. Fifty years ago the automobile was a small factor in personal transportation. Salesmen traveled by train and extensive hotel accommodations were necessary in any community. At the time The Oneonta opened there were five other hotels in the city and there was business enough for all.

On January 16, 1910, the Central Hotel, a big brick structure which had occupied the site for nearly forty years, was destroyed by fire. Hardly had the ashes cooled before Herbert T. Jennings, who had built the trolley line from Oneonta to Mohawk, organized the Main and Dietz Street Improvement Company, which started immediately to erect the present hotel block.

Within a year construction had progressed to a point where the First National Bank could occupy the section on the Dietz Street corner but it would be nine months before the hotel would open. At times it seemed as though that day would never come. Jennings, who had bought control of the bank, looted it and within three months the institution had closed and the promotor was on his way to federal prison. We told this story in *Volume One*.

The building was plastered with mechanics' liens which had to be satisfied. Frank D. Miller, D. F. Keyes and M. G. Keenan organized a company which paid the indebtedness and finished the work. The Hotel Oneonta opened its doors on September 25, 1911, with Charles E. Young as manager.

Let's see what the building looked like fifty years ago. The Citizens Bank occupied the Dietz Street corner, using about half the space it does now. Then came a vestibule with stairway and elevator to the second floor, where there were legal and medical offices. To the right of the hallway was the clothing store of F. A. Herrieff. The hotel used the rest of the ground floor.

The lobby was perhaps twice as big as at present. The space now used by the coffee shop and the brokerage office was the barroom until prohibition came. The vast dining room was where the western part of the Woolworth store now is. In the basement were a barber shop, reached by an outside stairway, and bowling alleys. On the top floor on the Dietz Street side was the big ballroom.

The City Club occupied the top floor until 1919 when the Delaware and Hudson leased the space for its divisional offices, staying there for about twenty years. The first broadcasts of Radio Station WDOS were from this location, its studio and offices being located there until the present property was purchased.

Much of Oneonta's social life centered in this imposing building in times gone by and many are the memories it evokes.

## *BASSETT HOSPITAL*

You won't get any support from Mr. Webster but when you are in Cooperstown you had best pronounce as Eye-mogene the middle name of the lady whose name the fine hospital in that village bears. It's the Mary Imogene Bassett Hospital but mind how you say it.

But no matter how you pronounce her name, Dr. Mary Imogene Bassett was a very remarkable woman and the house of healing which immortalizes her is one of the most unusual and best rural hospitals in the country.

Dr. Mary I. Bassett spent thirty years ministering to the sick and unfortunate of the Cooperstown area. Of course she did not have the knowledge of present day physicians, but whatever she lacked in professional skill she made up for by her wisdom, her devotion to her task in life and her deep humanity.

She came naturally by her medical bent for both of her parents were doctors. Her father, Dr. Wilson T. Bassett, was for long the most widely known physician and surgeon in the region. He was particularly interested in children and gave his services without charge to Susan Fenimore Cooper's Orphan House of the Holy Savior, an Episcopal institution for homeless and destitute children which the novelist's daughter founded and maintained.

The father became noted as an expert witness in court medical cases and in murder trials where insanity was the defense. His experiences led him to believe that criminality was usually the result of improper youth training and his plea for the support of the orphanage boys and girls was "It's cheaper to educate 'em than to hang 'em".

Dr. Wilson Bassett's wife was the pioneer woman physician in Otsego County and did much to dispel the popular prejudice against her sex in the field of medicine.

It is small wonder that the daughter became a physician or that she was a devoted one. Among her most ardent admirers was Edward Severin Clark, Cooperstown's greatest benefactor. He was a cripple who had suffered much and perhaps that is why he and Dr. Bassett dreamed of a hospital that would provide first class medical and surgical care for country people.

Fortunately Clark had the wherewithal to make the dream come true. He built the main hospital building in 1917, using stone that came from the old cotton mill at Index. In June of 1918, when World War I was at its height, he offered the nearly completed building to the United States Army.

The offer was accepted and the hospital was designated as a convalescent center for officers of the Army Air Corps. It continued in operation until late in 1919, providing care for about five hundred aviators.

The hospital was opened to the public in June of 1922 with Dr. Bassett as chief of staff. Following her death later that year the institution was closed and did not reopen until 1927.

Through the years Mary Imogene Bassett Hospital has gained steadily in stature as a healing institution and a research center, largely through the generosity of the Clarks. It is a mighty consummation of the dream of a wealthy cripple and a dedicated woman.



## CITIZENS BANK

When the First National Bank closed its doors in March of 1911 there was little cash in its vaults and much of the paper it held was of dubious character. Ruin seemed certain for scores of businessmen and for hundreds of workers whose life savings were on deposit there.

The officers and directors of the Citizens National Bank, a young outfit with only four years of experience behind it, were working desperately, however, to avert disaster. Led by president Frank H. Bresee and cashier Marcus Hemstreet, the Citizens worked out a plan to take over the assets and liabilities of the defunct institution.

Before the end of the month the Citizens had taken over the business of the First National and its quarters in the Hotel Oneonta block. Some persons officially connected with the ruined bank lost their shirts since at the time there was double liability for stockholders as well as directors, but no depositor was out a penny.

When the Citizens National Bank was organized in 1907 there were two strong banks in the village, the Wilber National and the First National. Each was controlled by one powerful man who held a majority of the stock. M. L. Keyes was czar of the First National and George I. Wilber was emperor of the Wilber National.

Good men they were, able and honorable, but many thought the bank stock should be more widely held and that no one person should hold powers of life and death over a financial institution.

On July 12, 1907, the government approved the application of Frank H. Bresee, A. R. Gibbs, Allen D. Rowe, John Graney and Melvin E. Baldwin (the last two of Schenevus) to establish the Citizens National Bank of Oneonta. A campaign was started to raise the needed capital of \$60,000.

Messrs. Keyes and Wilber tried to discourage the sale of stock by means of an advertisement extolling the merits of one man bank rule. The capital was quickly raised, however, and on November 20, 1907, the Citizens opened for business in the Willahan block (where Rudolph's is now).

The first officers were Frank H. Bresee, president; John Graney, vice-president; and Allen D. Rowe, cashier. The directors were prominent Oneonta and area business and professional men.

The bank grew steadily in assets and prestige. After 1911, when it took over the First National and moved across the street to the latter's quarters, its rate of growth greatly accelerated until now it is one of the most highly regarded financial institutions in the state, with assets of nearly thirteen millions of dollars.

During the '20s the bank enlarged its trust facilities and became the Citizens National Bank and Trust Company. For some years the bank has owned its portion of the hotel building and successive alterations and enlargements have given it beautiful and thoroughly modern quarters. In 1957 a branch was opened in the West End.

The Citizens Bank came a long way since those bleak days a half century ago when it did so much for so many of our citizens.

Negotiations, which may have been completed by the time you read this, have been under way for some time to merge the Citizens with the National Commercial Bank and Trust Company of Albany.

## THE GLIMMERGLASS

From Council Rock, where its waters flow out to form the Susquehanna, to Mount Wellington which dominates its northern reaches, the lake extends for nine miles of beauty and romance, of legend and history. To the Indian, it was Otesaga, Cooper called it the Glimmerglass and we know it as Otsego.

We shall not attempt to describe its beauty; many have tried but only James Fenimore Cooper has really succeeded. Read in "The Deerslayer" the description of the Glimmerglass as Leatherstocking first saw it and then reflect that its majesty and ineffable charm have diminished little through the years.

Legend clusters around Council Rock, near where General Clinton built the dam at the time of his expedition down the river. Louis Jones, in "Cooperstown", says: "There is considerable evidence, not only in Cooper's books but elsewhere, that Council Rock was an actual meeting place for the Indians."

Willard E. Yager, acknowledged authority on the Indians of this region, disputes this. In "The Oneota" he writes: "Nor do I find any evidence that the Red men ever 'held council' about this stone, or that it was, to use the very words of Cooper's rather amusing conception, during 'a succession of unknown ages' the 'seat' of 'many a forest chieftain'. Every rock in the land which the Indians are supposed to have visited, is commonly spoken of as 'a council rock', and the aboriginal name borne by any community is always 'place of rest'".

Be that as it may, the legend will continue to be believed and that is as it should be. We know that Leatherstocking and Judith Hutter, Chingachgook and Hurry Harry were only figments of Cooper's imagination but they are as alive in our minds as if they had once been real flesh and blood.

Not far from the famous rock are the docks where are moored many of the scores of motor and sailboats which ply the waters of the lake in season. Except for the use of canoes, the first navigation of the lake was undertaken in 1794 by a man known as Admiral Hassy, a celebrated fisherman who had a large flatboat with boards for sails.

About 1824 a group of men built a boat to transport lake parties. Two horses on treadmills attached to a paddle wheel furnished the propulsion. On each end of the craft was a high cabin topped by a platform. These structures caught the wind and made it almost impossible to steer the boat. Many a party starting for Three Mile Point found itself stranded on the opposite shore.

In the summer of 1870 Captain Daniel Boden began regular trips around the lake with a small steamboat which had been used as a gunboat during the Civil War and had been transported to Cooperstown by rail. It was renamed the Mary Boden. During the next year a rival steamboat was launched. This boat, which was a much larger craft, was christened the Natty Bumpo.

These were the famous boats of the lake until they were succeeded by the Pioneer and the Cyclone and later by the Deerslayer, the Pathfinder and the Mohican.

## THE OLD BACK YARD

The back yard as we knew it in the days of our youth has gone the way of the horse and buggy, the bustle and the bicycle built for two. Its appearance has altered and its function has changed and in that change can be traced the factors which make modern living so different from what it was a half century and more ago.

Some little time past there was considerable furor over the fact that a horse was stabled on a certain street in the Sixth Ward. Not only was the condition a stench in the collective nostrils of the neighborhood and a menace to the health of the populace but, judging from the uproar, it was a high crime against civilization.

We recall that when we were a boy there were twenty-five horses quartered along the short block on Walnut Street between Dietz and Church. It would appear in the light of modern thinking about health hazards that we had a poor chance of reaching man's estate but somehow or other we made it.

The horse stable was the keystone of the old back yard. Nearby was the manure pile flanked by heaps of wood and coal ashes. Some of the manure and wood ashes were used for lawn and garden fertilizer, the rest being hauled away about once a year.

Many back areas contained a chicken yard where breakfast fare and Sunday dinners were raised. There was usually a garden where vegetables were grown for the table.

In days of yore the back yard contained an outdoor plumbing installation and perhaps a cow shed and a pig pen but those adjuncts of a former mode of life were generally absent from the village in our youth.

Time marches on, however, and this type of back yard has practically disappeared. Dobbin has been replaced by the motor car and his old abode has been transformed into a garage or apartments. With a supermarket just around the corner, people no longer bother to raise poultry or vegetables. The ash problem has been taken care of by modern cooking and heating devices.

The area that was once the bete noir of the tidy housewife is now her pride and joy. Velvet lawns embroidered with flowers surround a brick or stone fireplace and the whole is apt to be enclosed by a fence too high for the kind of gossiping that used to enliven the day of the housebound women.

The front yard has also undergone a change. The horse block down by the curb has been long gone. The iron deer and the fountain are in some museum. The wide porch with its awnings and bamboo screens where the family used to gather on summer evenings has been sheared away from most dwellings. It still exists on some but is rarely used.

A residential street in the old days was a pleasant place along which to stroll in the summer dark. We miss its sights and sounds . . . the murmur of conversation on the porches . . . the twinkling of cigar ends . . . the cllop of hoofs and the complaint of buggy springs . . . the sharp smell of moistened dust.

But that is a way of life that is gone — gone with the nuisances and the pleasures of the back yard.



## OUR SUSQUEHANNA

An abundance of sweet water, pure and clear, blessed this region when the white man first settled here. Springs gushed from the hilltops, the midslopes and the valley terraces. A tiny brook made music in every dell of the great forests which stretched from horizon to horizon. Brooks flowed into larger brooks and they into the lateral streams which fed the river.

The Iroquois called it Gwanawanagunda or Great Island River. We know it today, however, by the ancient Algonquin name of Susquehanna, meaning the River of the Long Reaches.

When we term it a majestic river we are not referring to its aspect hereabouts. Go down to where it stretches a mile wide as it prepares to enter Chesapeake Bay and you must admit that it is one of the great streams of America.

Since its first use by man the Susquehanna (can you think of a lovelier name, unless it be Shenandoah?) has been many things. It was the river of the Indian, the soldier and the missionary, the river of the trader and the lumberman, the river of the ironmaster and the river of anthracite.

And until dams were built across its lower courses it was the river of the fisherman. Every spring until well after the beginning of the nineteenth century, shad came up the river from the sea to spawn. They penetrated Otsego Lake and went far up the larger tributaries. With them came silvery cisco herring in enormous numbers.

Fish traps and weirs were thrown across the stream by the Indian and later by the white man and the big shad and little herring were caught by the countless thousands. The pike-perch, known later as the Susquehanna pike, was another large fish (it sometimes attained a weight of twenty pounds) which abounded in olden times. There were savory pickerel in large numbers and trout lurked where cool springs flowed from the river banks.

During the past century and a half the Susquehanna at Oneonta has changed its course considerably, swinging across the valley from the Prospect Street terrace more than halfway to Southside.

Until the railway was put through in 1865 the river in the Plains section ran close to the bluff on which is now Oneida Street.

Until the destruction of the forests which once covered the land, the Susquehanna, as well as its tributaries, carried more water than at present and the yearly floods were much more devastating than any within present memory. Before the grading and draining made necessary by the building of the railroad, it was sometimes possible in flood time to reach the rear of the stores on the south side of Main Street by boat.

There were mills along the river, of course, but even the creeks carried sufficient water to furnish power for industries of various kinds. Silver Creek, which now flows through the city almost unnoticed, once turned the wheels of a gristmill and two sawmills and furnished water for a distillery. There were four mills on Oneonta Creek.

That is the Susquehanna, praised and cursed through the years as it gave or took away. It was here long before we came; it will be here long after we depart.

## THE BUILDING AND LOAN

The ads were short but packed with wit and common sense. Day after day, month after month, year after year they ran, telling the people what the Oneonta Building and Loan Association had to offer.

But that was a long time ago, in a day when the idea of a savings institution specializing in home mortgage loans was quite a novelty, at least hereabouts. Today the Oneonta Building and Loan Association is no longer the "kid brother" of the city's conventional banks but stands beside them as a full fledged partner in the financial structure that serves the community.

The first chink in the armor of the conventional banking system in Oneonta appeared in 1873 when a group of citizens organized the Oneonta Savings Bank, Inc. This outfit lasted less than a year but it put an idea into the head of Walter Scott, who came to Oneonta in 1871 to start a remarkable career as merchant, insurance agent, soldier, ad writer and banker.

On February 18, 1888, said the Oneonta Herald: "Walter Scott, T. Waldo Stevens, B. W. Hoyer and about twenty others met in the office of Counselor Hoyer for the purpose of talking up a building and loan association."

The "talking up" brought results and soon the Oneonta Building and Loan Association was incorporated with A. Condit, president; Walter Scott, vice-president; B. W. Hoyer, secretary; and T. W. Stevens, treasurer. Until 1913 the Association grew slowly, the assets in that year being slightly under \$500,000.

Then another remarkable man, W. Irving Bolton, appeared upon the scene. A graduate of the Oneonta Normal School, he first taught and then became School Commissioner of Otsego County. In his spare time he studied law and was admitted to the bar. He was Oneonta's first city judge and the only man ever to hold that office as well as those of alderman and mayor.

W. I. Bolton joined the Building and Loan staff in 1913 as secretary-treasurer. He quickly mastered the arts necessary for his new profession and soon became as good a banker as he was an attorney and had been a teacher.

Under his management the Association really began to roll, its assets increasing from under \$500,000 in 1913 to \$15 million in 1945. His son, Danforth D. Bolton, joined the staff when he finished high school and in a short time became secretary-treasurer.

Dan served as a major in the Air Corps during World War II and upon his return another interesting phase of the Association's work began, the granting of Veterans Administration guaranteed loans, the so-called "G.I. Loans". Millions of dollars were so loaned and the Association became widely known for the tremendous job which it did in this field.

The Building and Loan Association had its first quarters in Colonel Scott's offices on the second floor of 129 Main Street over Palmer's Grocery. It moved to its present location on Chestnut Street in the early '20s. The building has been enlarged and modernized several times.

From that little acorn planted in 1888 has grown a mighty oak with Savings Share capital of \$15,571,140.46, reserves of \$1,997,681.35 and total assets of \$17,817,205.96.

## *SLEEPERS CAME FIRST*

It would probably have been called the Laurens Massacre except for the fact that nobody was killed. But just why the band of Senecas, who the day before had participated in the bloody affray at Cherry Valley, spared the lives of Mrs. Sleeper and her ten children was a mystery even to Chief Joseph Brant.

Mr. Sleeper had left for his native New Jersey shortly before and the family was defenseless when the savages came on that January day in 1779 into the clearing just south of where the Laurens Central School now stands. The Indians robbed the family of everything it owned and burned the log cabin and the grist and saw mills.

Joseph Sleeper was the first settler in what is now the village of Laurens although two men had preceded him into the Otego Creek Valley.

In 1773 Joseph Mayall settled about a mile northeast of the present village. That same year Richard Smith, explorer, author and member of the Continental Congress, came to settle on the several thousand acres which he had purchased in the Otsdawa and Otego Creek valleys. He built a frame house near the present Laurens which was widely known as "Smith Hall". Joseph Sleeper was one of the men whom Smith persuaded to live on his lands. He was a Quaker preacher as well as a surveyor, millwright, carpenter and blacksmith.

Sleeper built a log house, a sawmill and a gristmill, doing all of the work himself. It was his intention to plant a Quaker colony around his mills but the war interfered with this project.

Sleeper returned from New Jersey soon after his house was burned and took his family back to that state. He returned after the war and rebuilt his home and mills, which he sold in 1794 to Griffin Crafts, who was to become, in 1811, the first supervisor of the town of Laurens.

Crafts built a brick house on the site of the Central School and his family was prominent in the town for generations. Originally known as Sleeper's Mills, the village was called Craftstown for years.

General Erastus Crafts succeeded to his father's estate in 1815. He was town supervisor for thirteen years and member of the assembly from 1810 through 1814.

Other early names in Laurens were Ferguson, Field, Armstrong, Dean, Whipple, Chatfield, Potter, Winsor, Strong, Keyes, Merrill, Mulkins, Cook, Gray, Pope, Jenks, Cooley, Caulkins, Gregory, Mead, Taylor, Crockett, Fisher, Kidder, Frink, Fenton, Hurlbutt, Benedict, Babcock, Johnson, Gilbert, Barton, Hoag, Hopkins, Grover, Philips and Pixley.

The history of Laurens is much like that of most of the villages in this vicinity. Once it was a teeming center of industry with a cotton mill, a hammer factory, hat factory, furniture shop, tannery, cabinet factory and wagon works, together with other small industries.

The building of the Erie Canal and the coming of the railroad stifled its industrial growth, leaving it a beautiful and delightful residential community.



## UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

It was nearly dawn when the big farm wagon drew up in the back yard of the Ford Stone Mansion and the small group of colored people alighted. The women went into the basement kitchen to help Mrs. Ford prepare breakfast while the men busied themselves with whatever tasks came to hand.

After a hearty meal the runaway slaves were lodged in improvised quarters over the stables, there to sleep until nightfall, when they would set out, with fresh driver and horses, for Gerrit Smith's home near Utica, the next stop on their way to Canada and freedom.

Such scenes occurred at intervals during the two decades just prior to the Civil War, for the Stone Mansion, located where the Wilber Bank now stands, was a "station" on the Underground Railroad and Eliakim R. Ford, the most prominent citizen of Oneonta at the time, was the stationmaster.

How many "passengers" went through the village is not known but from 1830 to 1860 at least two thousand slaves a year escaped from their masters and made their way north into free territory with the aid of the Underground. The Susquehanna valley was the chief route for the line between tidewater Virginia, the eastern shore country and Canada.

The scheme was simple enough. Agents were sent south to spread the word among slaves as to where the nearest station in a free state was located. A slave upon escaping would travel north by night, following the north star or the valleys. When he reached the first station, be it farmhouse, mansion, shack or mill, he would be taken in, fed and clothed and sent on to the next depot.

Often he was taken to the next link in the chain by a "conductor", under a pile of hay in a wagon or openly, as the situation demanded. It was an illegal operation, to be sure. The Fugitive Slave Law, first enacted in 1793 and repassed, with more teeth in it, by Congress in 1851, made it a Federal offense to aid a slave in escaping from his owner. The law was flouted, however, by hundreds of northerners, some of them the most prominent men in their communities.

Despite general opposition to the law, there was danger involved in working for the Underground. There were spies and informers who would expose the workers for a price. Rogues infiltrated the movement, kidnapped escaped slaves and returned them to their owners for the rewards offered.

Oneonta and the surrounding country was strongly abolitionist, as might be expected in a region which had been settled by men seeking freedom, albeit of a different nature. The Fords, the Huntingtons and others of the early families were ardent supporters of the Underground and participated in its activities hereabouts.

When we were a boy we heard E. Reed Ford, youngest son of the station master, tell of the work of his father in the movement. Reed Ford was a lad in the period just before the Civil War and witnessed the arrival of many "trains" at his home. He recalled the gratitude of the negroes and their great desire to do as much work as possible during their brief stay at the big stone house.

E. R. Ford and others of his ilk were pioneers in the continuing fight for civil rights.

## CLARKES AND HYDE HALL

For nearly a century and a half Hyde Hall stood near the head of Otsego Lake, seemingly nestled between the paws of the Sleeping Lion, as Mount Wellington is referred to in Cooperstown. It has known no human occupancy for many years but time was when it was the seat of a vast land empire and when its huge rooms teemed with life and activity.

Long before the fabulous Clarks made Cooperstown their summer abode, the Clarks were holding court in baronial style in Hyde Hall. There was a much greater difference between the two families in early days than just the "e" at the end of the name of one. The Clarks had made their money "in trade" while the Clarkes were landed gentry, surrounded by their tenantry.

The first George Clarke came to America soon after graduation from Oxford to become colonial lieutenant governor of New York from 1737 to 1744. He married Anne Hyde, daughter of the royal governor of North Carolina and became owner of her huge estate by the old English law of coverture.

The builder of Hyde Hall was his great-grandson, another George Clarke, who had inherited a part of the large American land holdings of the governor. In 1809 he left his home, Hyde Hall in Cheshire, England, came to the New World and married as his second wife Anne Cary, widow of Richard Cooper, brother of the novelist. In 1813 he began the construction of Hyde Hall.

The main part of the house, completed in 1815, is two stories high and over two hundred feet long. The facade was added in 1832. The building is massively constructed of huge blocks of limestone quarried nearby. The brick was pressed from clay found in the vicinity and the windows, doors and panel work were made on the spot of timber cut in the nearby forest.

In his habits, mode of living and relations with his tenants, Clarke was typically English but his warm nature prevented any lasting enmities. He died in 1835 and was succeeded by his son, George, who became at twenty-one the largest land holder in the state. He owned sixteen thousand acres in Otsego County and about thirty thousand in other shires.

This Clarke had an insatiable hunger for land and to acquire more acres he mortgaged the Hyde Hall property and allowed the buildings to deteriorate. Little by little he lost most of his land and when he died in 1889 he was insolvent.

His son, George Hyde Clarke, married the granddaughter of William Averell of Cooperstown and it was her money that saved the old home. Hyde Clarke was as traditionally English as his grandfather and once more Hyde Hall assumed the aspect of a country seat of the landed gentry. Until well into the present century the squire was a familiar part of the life of Cooperstown and the countryside and Hyde Hall buzzed with brilliant activity.

Hyde Clarke was succeeded as proprietor by his son, another George Hyde. New York State now owns six hundred and twenty-five acres of the estate and is converting it into a public recreation area. The Education Department wants Hyde Hall preserved as an historical landmark and a way is being sought to accomplish this.

## MISTAKEN IDENTITY

It was a tragic way for Fred G. Beale to die. The body of the twenty-seven year old president of the Mobinco Brokerage Company in Binghamton, and former Oneonta insurance man, was found in the charred ruins of his car at the foot of a cliff near Hancock just over the Pennsylvania line. The body was burned beyond recognition but the unfortunate victim was most certainly Fred G. Beale.

This was on September 27, 1925. Three days later the mourners were assembled in the insurance executive's Binghamton home and funeral services were about to begin when the ringing of the doorbell disturbed the respectful quiet of the house.

The visitor was a police officer who informed the widow, the three children and the friends that the funeral must be postponed since there was considerable doubt as to the identity of the body in the casket.

The incident was but one macabre chapter in a story which held the interest of Oneontans for months, since Beale had once lived here, several local people were financially interested in his insurance brokerage business and one well known Oneonta business man was a director.

When the badly burned body was found there was no reason to doubt that Beale had met an untimely end and the coroner's investigation was perfunctory. The next day committal services for another person were being held in a small cemetery near Hancock when it was noticed that the earth was disturbed over the grave of James Davis, who had died about six months before.

An investigation disclosed that Davis' body had been stolen. When it was found that Beale carried \$21,000 life insurance and that during the past few days he had collected several hundred dollars in insurance premiums which he had not turned in at the company office, the police began to suspect that the body found in the car was that of Davis and that Beale had absconded.

The funeral was ordered stopped and an autopsy performed which showed that the body was indeed that of Davis. Evidently Beale had disinterred the corpse, dressed it in his clothing and placed it behind the steering wheel. He had then set fire to the car and pushed it over the precipice.

The affairs of the Mobinco company, which dealt in automobile insurance, were thoroughly investigated. Beale had evidently forged a few checks, obtaining a small amount of money, but in the main, things were in good order. A warrant was issued charging forgery, grand larceny and grave robbery and the search for the fugitive started. He was trailed through New England but the scent was finally lost.

There was little to go on but Captain Daniel Fox and his men of Troop C, State Police, persisted and in February of 1926, through clever detective work, located their man in Miami, Florida, where he was living under the name of G. O. Burton.

Beale was returned to Delaware County and tried for grave robbery, the other charges being dropped. He was convicted and sentenced to state's prison for a term of from two to four years. He served his time in Auburn Prison and a sensational case was closed.



## A UNIQUE TOWNSHIP

In one respect the town of Oneonta has had a unique history, one that would be hard to duplicate anywhere in the country.

At one time or another, wholly or in part, it has been in five different counties and in ten townships.

Prior to 1683 this was an unnamed part of the great wilderness in the province of New York. From 1683 we were in Albany County, which then embraced all of the lands in the state west of the Hudson River.

In 1772 a new county was formed, comprising all of the state west of the Helderbergs and the Delaware River and north to the Canadian border. This was called Tryon County after the English governor.

In 1784, with independence won, the county was renamed Montgomery in honor of General Richard Montgomery, the distinguished Continental officer. Otsego County was formed from Montgomery in 1791 with its southern boundary the Susquehanna River.

Originally this section was in the town of Otsego. In 1792 the town of Unadilla was formed. This included most of the territory now in the town of Oneonta. Come 1776 and the towns of Otego and Suffrage (name changed to Milford in 1801) were formed from Unadilla with what is now Oneonta divided between them.

Those who lived in the western section were in Otego while most of what is now the city of Oneonta was in Milford. The village was known for years as Milfordville, not getting the name Oneonta until 1832. The dividing line between Otego and Milford was near the present Richmond Avenue.

In 1822 the land carvers got busy again and the town of Huntsville was created from Unadilla, Otego and an entire tier of lots on the south side of the river. This took land away from the towns of Franklin, Kortright and Davenport in Delaware County and gave it to Otsego.

When Oneonta township was created in 1830, Huntsville was abolished, part of the land going to the new town and the rest reverting to Unadilla and Otego.

The town of Oneonta was authorized by an act of the state legislature passed in 1830 but organization was not effected until March 1, 1831, at a meeting held in the tavern of Thomas Alexander at the northwest corner of Main and Chestnut Streets. William Richardson was the first supervisor and Adam Brown the first town clerk.

In 1835 the total tax paying population was 261 and the grand total tax levy was \$781.48, of which \$100.45 was allocated to the schools.

At one time or another, the town of Oneonta has been in the counties of Albany, Tryon, Montgomery, Delaware and Otsego and in the towns of Otsego, Unadilla, Otego, Suffrage, Milford, Huntsville, Franklin, Kortright, Davenport and Oneonta.

## DUAL PERSONALITY

George B. Baird was two persons. To the man on the street he was that arrogant acting guy who lived in the big house on Chestnut Street and who was so rich that he didn't have to work. But to those who knew him well he was a fine person who hid a deep humanity under a mask of brusqueness and a domineering manner.

He was indeed a man of wealth who thoroughly enjoyed the good things of life but his acts of kindness and benevolence were legion. He would ride roughshod over you if you let him, but if you resisted, you earned his respect and esteem.

George Buckingham Baird was born in 1863 in Delaware County and was the son of Russell D. Baird, a farmer and banker of considerable means. He was educated at Delaware Literary Institute and Eastman Business College, Poughkeepsie, from which he was graduated in 1882. After five years in the Wilber Bank and in a Cobleskill bank he settled in Oneonta permanently.

In 1890 he married Susan Morris, only child of William H. Morris, a prominent local business man and brother of Albert Morris, the city's first mayor. Mr. Baird bought the Collis P. Huntington home at the corner of Church and Chestnut Streets, razed it and built a brick residence which at the time was the most elaborate and expensive dwelling in the village.

Over the years George Baird became interested in many business ventures in the community. He was one of the men who brought the McCammon Piano Company here and he became its treasurer. For some years he was a director and vice-president of the Citizens National Bank. His property holdings in Oneonta were extensive.

George Baird was a "sport" in the sense that he was a lover of good horseflesh, a connoisseur of fast motor cars and was avidly interested in athletic endeavor of any kind. He was one of the organizers of the Oneonta Country Club and was its first president, serving three years in that capacity.

When Oneonta became a city in 1909, Mr. Baird was appointed a member of the first Fire Commission and was chairman of that body for twelve years. He spent a great deal of time building up the paid department which had replaced the volunteer groups. The Commission was often short of funds and Mr. Baird would advance the money to buy new equipment, never charging interest on the loans. His will gave the city \$10,000 to purchase new apparatus.

At the time the United States entered World War I in 1917, George Baird was appointed a member of the Local Exemption Board together with P. I. Bugbee and Dr. Frank L. Winsor. He served as chairman of the group throughout the conflict and rendered outstanding service. He was eminently fair and could not be influenced by friendship or any other consideration.

In 1929 Mr. Baird sold his home to a group of Oneonta physicians and he and his wife moved to Pasadena, California. He retained his business interests and his legal residence here, however.

He died in Pasadena, on March 31, 1931, and was buried in the Morris lot in Riverside Cemetery, Oneonta.

## JANUARY OF '24

It probably never occurred to the men who were installing the new turntable in the huge D.&H. roundhouse that January day in 1924 that their handiwork would last a scant three decades. The truck was but a small cloud in the transportation sky and they had never heard of a diesel engine.

Steam locomotives were getting bigger and bigger but the turntable they were working on would accommodate any of them. It was one hundred and four feet long, the biggest affair of its kind in the world.

What else was happening in Oneonta that January forty years ago? Business was good and getting better. The pot was being prepared for those two chickens and the garage for two cars. The laborer was happy, the merchant jubilant and the bootlegger ecstatic.

Mayor W. Irving Bolton started his administration with a pledge of economy and the announcement of the following appointments: Robert O. Marshall, city clerk; Frank C. Huntington, city attorney; Thomas J. O'Brien, sealer of weights and measures; Everett B. Holmes, acting city judge; Clarence R. Avery, commissioner of charities; Donald H. Grant, police attorney.

At the first meeting of the Common Council there was a request from the police department for an increase in pay. The scale in effect at the time was \$140 per month for the chief and \$125 for sergeants. Patrolmen got from \$100 to \$115 per month depending upon length of service.

A large number of Oneonta Rotarians journeyed to Cooperstown by special trolley and installed a club in that village, with Roscoe C. Briggs representing the district governor, Edwin R. Weeks of Binghamton. Entertainment was furnished by the Oneonta group's Village Choir, a most unusual aggregation composed of Jerry B. Wilson, Andrew C. Lange, Dr. Norman W. Getman, Dr. L. S. Lang, Ralph S. Wyckoff, Ellsworth Scatchard and Charles VanDeusen.

The secretary of the New York State Automobile Club spoke at a meeting of the Oneonta affiliate and expressed the unalterable opposition of his group to compulsory liability insurance. At the annual meeting of the YMCA the opinion was expressed by many that a new and larger Association building was badly needed.

A special train took 184 D.&H. employees to Carbondale to witness boxing bouts between representatives of the Oneonta shops and those in the Pennsylvania town. The local pugilists were Jimmy Devlin, Larry Powers, Kid Rowe, Bombardier Gould, and A. Kludas. Unfortunately, the local team lost every fight.

George Carley of Cooperstown was elected president of the newly formed Boy Scout Council for Otsego, Delaware and Schoharie counties and plans were made to raise \$6,000 so that a full time scout executive might be hired. Oneonta's share of the expense was \$2,100.

It was announced that the Public Park and Playground Improvement Association would hold a dance at the Armory with music by Paul Whiteman's Steamship Orchestra. The net proceeds would be used to pay last year's baseball debts and to finance a team for the coming season.



## ONEONTA CLIPPER

Surely that black stuff which Joseph Taber and Gideon Cornell brought on sleighs from Carbondale to West Oneonta in 1830 wouldn't burn! It looked and felt like stone and most certainly you couldn't ignite limestone or granite.

But burn it did, and it wasn't long before the ironmongers realized that it gave a much hotter flame and was more economical than the charcoal which they had previously used in their furnace on the banks of the Otego Creek on ground now part of the Country Club golf course. The substance which the men found so satisfactory was the first hard coal ever seen in this region.

This foundry was established in 1816 and operated for nearly a century. Its principal product in the early days was the famous "Oneonta Clipper" plow. About twenty years ago a plowshare bearing this name and the date of the patent, November 14, 1815, was found embedded in a tree near West Oneonta. The name of the inventor is not known but it is probable that it was he who established the foundry which Taber and Cornell later acquired.

About the middle of the century the foundry was purchased by Freeman Culver, who added to its fame by inventing and manufacturing the first sidehill plow. He also held patents on other types of agricultural machines.

In time the business passed to Freeman Culver's brother Benjamin, who, with another brother, Jesse, ran it until 1903 when it was sold to Henry Taber, a descendant of Joseph. He later sold the concern to Curtis Culver (no kin of the others) who ran it until it burned in 1910. In its later years the foundry turned out fences, urns and other ornamental iron products.

The Culver foundry was first in the field and did a large business but in quantity of output it was surpassed by the firm of Howe and Ford, which turned out thousands of plows and other farm tools in its foundry and machine shop at the corner of Broad and Market Streets where the Oneonta Grocery Company building now stands.

This firm was established in 1865 and for twenty years its products were sold throughout the United States and South America. This company, which employed about seventy-five men, made the Howe patent two horse cultivator; the Howe patent sulky horse rake; revolving rakes; Teel's patent wheel scraper; Hodge patent plows; wagon brakes, bolt cutters and many other items for use on farms.

The Hodge plow was of the reversible type and would work equally well on level ground or on a hillside. It was the invention of Rev. Ephraim Hodge, a most remarkable man.

Not only was Hodge the inventor of tools for agriculture but he was a practical man of the soil, operating a large farm at East End. In addition, he served as pastor for Baptist congregations in West Oneonta, Ouleout and East Meredith, traveling each Sunday by horse and buggy to the three charges. He received no salary, getting only what donations there might be.

Advertisements in the Oneonta Herald in 1853 indicate that there was another plow factory at that time. This concern, run by William Francis and Company, probably operated the foundry on lower Main Street below the grist mill.

## DOCTOR AND SQUIRE

He was one of the most celebrated physicians of his time and yet for most of his ninety years he refused to accept money for his services. As the man who introduced vaccination into the country and as a pioneer in the humane treatment of the mentally ill, he had America at his feet in a medical sense and yet he chose to live as a country squire on his farm near Morris.

You can find his headstone in a little Quaker cemetery but it will not tell you that here lies a man who was once an English baronet but who renounced his title and as Dr. William Yates attained such eminence in his profession that when he died the New York Times printed a two column obituary.

William Yates, one of the most remarkable men who ever lived in Otsego County, was born in 1767 at Sappeton, England. He studied medicine as a private pupil of Sir James Earle of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, and then worked with him, first as his dresser and then as house surgeon.

In about 1787 he inherited a baronetcy and a sizable fortune and returned to Sappeton. At that time the treatment of lunatics, as the mentally ill were then called, was barbaric. Dr. Yates disagreed with this approach and built a hospital for the unfortunates and pioneered in their humane care.

One day a violently insane man killed another patient and then committed suicide. This so shocked the doctor that he closed the institution and sailed for America, arriving in Philadelphia in July of 1792.

Dr. Yates had been a friend of Dr. Edward Jenner, who had perfected a method of inoculating against the scourge of smallpox, using serum from cows with vaccinia, or cowpox, a variant of the human disease. He had studied Jenner's methods and had secured from him a large supply of virus.

For seven years he vaccinated thousands of people and fought constantly for acceptance of the technique as sound medical practice. It was not until 1799 that fear and skepticism were overcome and professors at Harvard acknowledged vaccination to be an effective preventive of smallpox.

The doctor had become acquainted with William Cooper, General Jacob Morris and Pascal Franchot, all noted Otsego residents. In 1880 he made a trip to the Butternut Valley with Judge Cooper. He fell in love with the country and with Hannah Palmer, daughter of Ichabod Palmer. He married her in 1802 and took her for a two year honeymoon in England, where he had many relatives, including John Howard, the philanthropist, and Sir Robert Peel, later to be prime minister. While there he renounced the title of Sir William Yates, Bart.

Upon their return to America he bought a thousand acres in the Butternut valley and settled down as a country squire. At first he occupied the home of Ebenezer Knapp, whose land he had acquired. In 1847 he built the Yates homestead, which still stands on the back road to Garrattsville.

Dr. Yates was a man of kindness and spent much time treating the illnesses of his friends and neighbors but would never accept a fee. On one of these trips in the dead of winter he froze a foot, gangrene resulted and he died on March 7, 1857, aged ninety.

He had four sons and Yates blood flows in the veins of many persons now living in the region.

## RAILTOWN, U.S.A.

The rails are there, as they have been for nearly a hundred years, but magic no longer rides upon them. Buildings that once teemed with activity now stand vacant or have been put to alien use.

A student once asked us when the railroad left Oneonta and why. We could have told her, although it wasn't the answer we gave, that it departed when the fires were pulled on the last steam locomotive and when the conductor shouted his last "All Aboard".

The Delaware and Hudson is still an important industry, rendering service which no other type of carrier can give, but the glamour faded when they put motors in boxcars and set them to drawing trains and the last of the tinsel dropped off when the ticket offices were closed and people were forced to travel by the unromantic bus and automobile.

Oneonta was once "Railtown U.S.A." Every "hogger" from coast to coast knew that here was one of the largest roundhouses in the world and that the turntable therein was the biggest in all creation; every "shack" in the land could tell you that the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, the largest of the operating unions, was born in Oneonta; and every "gandy dancer" was aware that the hump system of switching freight cars had its origin, appropriately enough, in the City of the Hills.

When the Albany and Susquehanna, the forerunner of the D.&H., reached Oneonta in 1865 the hamlet had but a few hundred people. The road brought many new residents and when the shops were built in the early 1870s hundreds more came in. From 1865 to 1880 the population increased four-fold and it doubled in the next decade, all because of the railroad.

For at least three quarters of a century Oneonta's economy rested firmly on the railroad. The D.&H. dollar was the coin that fed, housed and clothed most of the citizens, that built schools, churches and residences.

In their heyday the shops employed hundreds of such artisans as machinists, blacksmiths, boilermakers and tinsmiths; carpenters, painters and plumbers, electricians and upholsterers. Locomotives were repaired here and freight and passenger cars built and kept in working order. The freight marshalling yards were among the biggest in the east.

At one time over a hundred train crews of five men each worked out of Oneonta on the north and southbound runs. Hundreds of trackmen and bridge builders were headquartered here. Some of the largest locomotives in the country were used on the D.&H. because of the heavy grades.

The great railroad ball is over but the melody lingers on and it is small wonder that the idea of creating a railroad museum here has met with such enthusiasm. Oneonta made a valiant try to secure "Steamtown, U.S.A.", the famous collection of engines and railroad memorabilia, but to no avail. We feel sure that other schemes will be promoted, however.

We are no longer "Railtown, U.S.A." but perhaps a bit of the color and romance of those glorious days can be recreated and preserved for future generations to wonder at and savor.



## HOMES AWAY FROM HOME

Back in the days when the horse was king of transportation and even later when the iron horse replaced the hay burner, a town was known for the quantity and quality of its accommodations for the wayfarer.

Oneonta had a good reputation in that respect. Its hotels and inns were numerous and well managed. There were no private baths and the corn shock mattresses might be lacking in comfort but there was good food, warmth and cheer and that was what the traveler wanted.

Let's take a look at what Oneonta had to offer through the years in respect to homes away from home. The first inn within the present city limits was opened in 1785 by Simeon Walling in a log house on the site of the United Presbyterian Church. It was replaced by a frame building in 1808 and was conducted by son Joseph Walling until he built his brick mansion in 1854.

In 1796 Aaron Brink opened a log tavern just east of the present Elmore mills. Apparently this venture was short-lived. About 1800 Benjamin Baltus Kimball built a log inn south of Glenwood Cemetery, probably near the present corner of Reynolds and Chester Streets. It operated but a short time.

From about 1800 to 1809 Peter Schoolcraft ran an inn in a rude structure a few feet east of the corner of Chestnut and Main on the north side of the street.

In 1812 two caravanseries opened their doors. One was the famous McDonald tavern at the corner of Main and River, which operated until 1834. The other was the Fritts tavern near the northwest corner of Main and Chestnut. This became the well known Oneonta House and was conducted until 1873.

On the opposite corner of Chestnut was the noted Susquehanna House, which was opened in 1834 by Roderick and Carleton Emmons and was run by various proprietors until 1892. A tavern at the corner of River Street and Fonda Avenue was built in 1825 by Cornelius Livingston but did not last long.

The Windsor Hotel at the corner of Chestnut and Wall opened in 1884 and was a well known place until a few years ago. The Cottage Hotel ran for some years from 1896 on the site of Jack's Restaurant. The Wilson House at Chestnut and Market was built in 1893 and was operated for over half a century.

From 1891 until 1908 there was a hotel, first called the City and then the Arlington, in the Wooden Row on Main Street where the Diana Restaurant is now. On the site of the Hotel Oneonta once stood the Central Hotel, the leading hostelry in the village for many years. Built in 1873, this big brick hotel dispensed shelter and hospitality until 1910 when it was destroyed by fire.

Broad Street has had several hotels, the largest of which was the Hathaway House at the corner of Prospect. Built in 1865, this hotel furnished food and lodging for nearly three-quarters of a century.

The Brunswick Hotel (now Winney's) at the corner of Market was built by M. G. Connell in 1886. On the vacant lot next to the Otsego Laundry stood for fifty-six years a hotel built in 1886 and conducted through the years by twenty-four proprietors and under seven different names.

There were three other small inns on the street at various times.

## WAITING FOR THE 305

The day when Mother was to take us to Albany to see Dr. Bedell, the eye specialist, and then to New York for some sight seeing, finally arrived. The wait for the cab which would take us to the D.&H. station was agonizing. We just knew that it would be late and that we would miss the train but it wasn't and soon we were whirling along behind two fast steppers.

A railroad station was a thrilling place for a kid back in the days of steam and it was doubly so when he had business there. As we got out of the cab we noticed the row of hacks from the Coy, Camp and Wilcox livery stables waiting for fares from among the incoming passengers. Over by the baggage room were the Beach and Bissell delivery wagons which would take the drummers' trunks to the hotels.

The waiting room was crowded and Mother kept a firm grip on our hand lest we get lost in the throng. We could see Tommy O'Brien, the station master, nattily dressed and sporting a huge diamond in his cravat. Behind him in the ticket office the telegraph keys were clicking merrily.

Mother didn't have to buy tickets. Father had gone to M. G. Keenan's ticket brokerage office the day before and had purchased a mileage book. This contained small coupons, each good for a mile ride on any road. The common railroad fare in those days was three cents a mile. M.G. bought the books from the D.&H. for two cents a mile and charged his customers two and a half cents. He made a half cent a mile and his patrons saved that amount.

There were appetizing smells from the restaurant in the corner of the station but Mother said "no". Presently A. B. Saxton appeared, notebook in hand, and inquired as to where we were going, why and for how long. The next morning the Star would carry the news of our trip and the curiosity of the neighbors would be satisfied.

We finally worked our way through the crowd and out onto the platform. Near us was a young man with a huge tray of cut flowers from the greenhouse down in the yards. He would go through the train and present each woman with a nosegay, compliments of the D.&H.

Finally we heard No. 305 blow for the Fonda Avenue crossing and then the long station blast. Around the turn above the viaduct she came with her bell clanging. As the big locomotive passed us we could see the showers of sparks as the brake shoes bit into the steel tires. Behind the engine and tender were the mail car, two baggage cars, the smoker and four passenger coaches.

This was before the day of vestibule coaches and we could see the conductor and trainmen standing on the car platforms with little steps in their hands. We entered the coach and found seats. The long day's journey into paradise had started.

What we have related was commonplace a half century and more ago but there are people today who have never ridden on a railroad train and some who have never seen a steam locomotive pull a train into a station, to our mind one of the great sights of all time.

## A PRESIDENT GETS LOST

It was probably due to the darkness of the night and unfamiliarity with the terrain, but just possibly the flowing bowl may have had a hand in the matter. In any event, a President of the United States once got lost in the spacious grounds of Woodside, one of the fine old homes in Cooperstown.

Unlike the situation in Oneonta, the ancient homes in the county seat did not stand in the path of progress and hence many exist today. In fact, few villages of the size of Cooperstown can equal it in the number of buildings of historical and architectural significance.

But to return to the wandering Chief Executive. Woodside, on the Mount Vision hillside at the head of Main Street, was built of native stone in 1829 by Judge Eben B. Morehouse. President Martin VanBuren was the honor guest at an evening reception in the mansion in 1829 and the story goes that when the party broke up he and a companion got thoroughly lost as they attempted to find the gate tower.

In 1865 Woodside was sold to Joseph L. White, a distinguished New York attorney who was intimately associated with the Nicaragua canal project. The Stokes family acquired it in 1895 and it was for years the home of the late State Senator Walter Watson Stokes.

On the east side of the river, not far from Woodside, is Riverbrink, the interesting home of Louis C. Jones, director of the New York State Historical Association. This dwelling, which stands on the verge of the flat where public hangings once took place, was built with bricks salvaged from the ruins of Otsego Hall, the famous Cooper mansion, which burned in 1852.

The oldest house in the village is the frame structure at the northwest corner of Main and River Streets. It was built in 1790 by William Griffin. For years it was the homestead of the Ernst family.

Across the street is the oldest stone house in Cooperstown, erected in 1804 by Judge William Cooper as a wedding present for his daughter Ann, who married George Pomeroy, the first druggist in the county. Under the eastern gable is a spread eagle and the initials of the young couple, wrought in stone.

The unusual herring-bone style in which the stone is laid gives this house an unusual charm. The dwelling was known for years as the Deacon Place since Pomeroy was a deacon in the Presbyterian Church but in later years it was called Pomeroy Place.

The first edifice erected in Cooperstown for religious use was the First Presbyterian church, which still stands on the east side of Pioneer Street at the corner of Elm. This wooden structure, built in 1805, was originally of early Colonial architecture with a ninety foot tower and cupola over the entrance. Later the exterior was altered into an unpleasing form of rounded arch Gothic. The church was restored to its original appearance in 1937.

The Clark Estate office at the entrance to the Cooper Grounds was built in 1831 as a banking house for the old Otsego County Bank which merged with the First National Bank in 1866. It stands near the site of the Colonel Croghan hut, probably the first house in the area.



## JAMES STEWART

It is hard for anyone to believe that the house at 2 Ford Avenue, back of the Penney store, was once one of the finest residences in Oneonta. Today it is gaunt, haggard and decrepit but there was a day when it stood as four-square and distinguished as the man who lived there, James Stewart.

This prominent citizen of former days was born at South Worcester on November 26, 1840, and was the scion of a line of sturdy Scots. Both his grandfather and his great-grandfather had held commissions as generals in the United States Regular Army.

His father, Dr. William Stewart, graduated from the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York in 1826. After his marriage to Hannah Becker, a sister of the famed attorney, Abram Becker of South Worcester, he moved to that village where he practiced his profession for many years.

James Stewart first attended the old Fergusenville Academy and later was a student at the famous seminary at Charlotteville. When the buildings of that school burned, Mr. Stewart continued his studies at the Delaware Literary Institute at Franklin.

At the age of twenty he began the study of medicine with his father. After a year he entered the law offices of his uncle, believing that he would find that profession more congenial than medicine. After his admission to the bar he took over the extensive law practice of Mr. Becker, who had just died. He was elected to the State Assembly in 1871, serving one term with distinction.

In 1873 he married Harriet Emmons Ford, daughter of Dewitt Ford, the oldest son of the pioneer, Eliakim R. Ford. After a year's residence in South Worcester the couple moved to Oneonta, where he opened a law office.

Soon after moving here, Mr. Stewart built the house on Ford Avenue which was thereafter the family home. In its day it was one of the showplaces of the village, with wide lawns where the Penney store now stands. At one time there was an artificial pond on the grounds, fed by a large spring which is now under the sidewalk near the corner of Ford and Main.

Mr. Stewart was appointed in 1887 as one of the original members of the local Board of Managers of the Oneonta State Normal School and for years he gave much time and effort to the affairs of that institution. In his younger days he was on the staff of General S. S. Burnside, holding a major's commission in the state militia.

He was a prominent layman of the Episcopal Church, serving for years as a vestryman of St. James' Church and as a member of the board of the Orphanage of the Holy Savior at Cooperstown. He was a member of Oneonta Masonic Lodge and a director for years of the local water works company.

The Stewarts had three children: the late Hugh F. Stewart, long a prominent banker in California; Dr. William B. Stewart, who died in early manhood; and Caroline Fairchild Stewart, now Mrs. Stewart Smith of Southside, Oneonta.

James Stewart died on December 18, 1911. The funeral was held in his beloved St. James' Church and burial was in Glenwood Cemetery.

## *DEVIL'S HALF ACRE*

It was once called the "Devil's Half Acre" but that was a century and a half ago when it was a roaring frontier town and a favorite overnight stop on the Catskill Turnpike.

Its later nickname, "Queen of the Catskills", is much more fitting, for the village of Stamford is truly that, as the many thousands of people who have spent summers there would testify.

The township was originally settled in 1773 by Dr. Alexander Stewart and John and Alexander More (or Moore), who came from Scotland. They were soon followed by Dr. Philander Smith, Elijah Brown and others from Stamford, Connecticut. The Revolution caused an evacuation of the section but at the end of the conflict the former settlers returned and named the region New Stamford.

In 1792 the village was organized and called Stamford. In 1802 the famous Catskill Turnpike was built. This thoroughfare, which had existed as a wood road since before the war, came from Catskill over Mt. Pisgah and proceeded through Manorkill, South Gilboa and Stamford and thence down the Charlotte and Ouleout Valleys to Unadilla on the Susquehanna.

Philo Baldwin built a tavern on the site of the present Delaware Inn which became a popular stopping place for the men who drove the big freight wagons and for the passengers on the stages which traversed the route. After heavy traffic ceased on the Turnpike some time before the Civil War, the settlement became a sleepy country village in a most picturesque setting.

In 1872 the Ulster and Delaware railroad reached Stamford. This provided an easy means of access to the Catskill region from New York City and it was not long before summer visitors began to flock to the village. Big hotels were built and the community prospered mightily during the hot months.

The greatest period in this phase of Stamford's history was from about 1910 to 1930, when the depression set in. The huge Churchill Hall (later the Maselynn) and Rexmere accommodated hundreds of guests. Then there were the Madison and Westholm, the Cold Spring Inn, the Atchinson and the New Grant House, Ivanhurst and the Belvedere.

Wealthy Cubans, many of them sugar plantation owners, discovered the charms of Stamford and went there each summer. The Habana and the Pearle da Cuba catered exclusively to this class of visitors. During this era Stamford had baseball teams of college stars and there was intense rivalry between the village and Oneonta.

Many of the hotels closed their doors thirty years ago and some have been razed. Quite a few summer visitors still find their way to the village, however. Many of the guests are of foreign extraction and it is said that the desk clerk at the Westholm needs to know five languages.

Largely through the efforts of Fred Murphy, Stamford is now experiencing a business boom and there is an air of bustle about the place. Many look back with nostalgia upon the golden years while others gaze hopefully into the future. For all, Stamford is a delightful place in which to live.

## THE PARKS WERE HIS

Each morning M. G. Keenan would saddle his horse and set out on an inspection tour of his domain—one hundred and fifty acres of greensward and woodland, equipped with swimming pool and skating pond, picnic areas and athletic fields.

Of course "M.G." did not own Wilber and Neahwa Parks. He was just the chairman of the Park Commission and if he acted at times as if the parks were his personal property, few cared since Oneonta benefitted greatly from that proprietary attitude.

Malcom Grant Keenan, who was prominent in business and in civic activities throughout his manhood, was born in Oneonta in 1868 and was the son of Malcolm Keenan, a blacksmith and Civil War cavalryman, and Julia (Babcock) Keenan. He was educated in the Oneonta schools and at Albany Business College.

Mr. Keenan learned the insurance business with Shelland and Nearing and then started his own office, which he maintained throughout his life despite his other interests. Much of the business in the early days was the sale of railroad mileage books. In 1903 he became involved in the breeding of ponies and for fifteen years operated, with L. C. Millard, the famous Pony Farm.

He had extensive real estate interests. He helped build the Oneonta Theatre and was a member of the firm of Miller, Keyes and Keenan which finished the Hotel Oneonta after the Jennings failure. Skeptics told him that the hotel restaurant would not make money so he ran it for awhile and proved otherwise.

M. G. Keenan was clerk of the Board of Education when the High School was built and was long secretary of the Rotary Club. The Men's Club of the First Presbyterian Church and the Chamber of Commerce were other groups in which he was vitally interested. He was a Mason for over forty years.

Although he went out of the pony business about 1918, horses remained a consuming interest and a number were always stabled behind his home at 10 Walnut Street. It was a rare day when he wasn't in the saddle at one time or another. He was a master wood craftsman and the basement of his residence was filled with tools and wood working machinery. Oil painting was another private interest which took some of what little spare time he had.

When Burtis C. Lauren took office as mayor in 1926, he appointed Mr. Keenan to the Park Commission and he was soon chosen as its chairman. For the next six years he gave a great deal of himself to the improvement of our park system and when he left office the parks were in infinitely better condition than when he began his work.

He saw possibilities that others had never suspected and he exploited those possibilities to the utmost. He created public interest in the parks and used that interest to the city's advantage. If money was lacking for needed projects he borrowed it or inveigled some citizen into contributing the cash. The parks were his baby and the child wanted for nothing.

M. G. Keenan was married to Nancy Young in 1895. There were two children. Helen, who married Henry Goss, is now deceased. Stuart is presently the dean of Oneonta insurance men. Mr. Keenan died on January 2, 1936, and was buried in the family plot in Riverside Cemetery.



## COVERED BRIDGES

Webster defines "covered wagon" but takes no note of "covered bridge" and yet at one time that kind of span was as much a part of the rural scene in the northeast as the stone wall, the smoke house and the two-seater.

From the turn of the nineteenth century until well along toward the start of the twentieth, creeks and rivers were crossed by wooden covered bridges of various structural types and ranging in length from twenty or thirty feet to ten times that size. At one period the Susquehanna River throughout its six hundred miles was spanned by a covered bridge on an average of every five miles.

As late as 1953 there were thirty-one covered bridges still in use in New York State including nine in Delaware County but the improvement of even secondary roads and the increased loads which bridges must carry spelled the doom of the ancient spans and most have gone the way of so much that was picturesque in the old way of life.

Why the "covered" bridge? It has been described as a "protection for travelers in inclement weather" and as a "blinder for timid horses who shy at sight of water" but these are not quite accurate definitions. The roof prevented the roadway from becoming slippery and hence was somewhat of a safety factor but the real reason for the covering was to protect from the elements the complicated joints and other structural features of the bridge itself.

In winter, however, the covered bridge had a considerable disadvantage. No snow fell on the roadway and it was virtually impossible for a team to draw a heavily laden sleigh or sled over a hundred or two feet of bare planking. This meant that someone had to keep the bridge floor covered with snow.

Using sound engineering principles, the builders fashioned their covered bridges from stout hickory and pine joists and planks, carefully mortised and mitered and tied together with white oak pegs. Sometimes the sides were of solid planking but more often they were latticed half way or completely from floor to roof.

Most of the covered bridges were so well constructed that they often celebrated their one hundredth birthday carrying double the loads for which they were intended.

From 1835 to 1888 a long, double-span covered bridge crossed the river at Oneonta at approximately the location of the present bridge. The covered bridge across the Susquehanna just above Colliers on Route 7 was built in 1832 and had been in use for ninety-seven years when it was taken down in 1929.

The Colliers bridge was constructed by Captain Edward Thorn of three by ten inch native hemlock timbers. These were turned out with an up and down saw at the Jared Goodyear sawmill located where Colliers dam is now and were drawn to the bridge site by ox team. This was the last of the covered bridges over the Susquehanna to be used.

The bridge at Colliers was the only one across our river which we recall but bright in memory are several across the Delaware. The one at Downsville was particularly impressive with its 318 feet of length supported by two piers. That at North Blenheim across the Schoharie stretched 232 feet and was the longest single-span covered bridge in the world.

## BUTCHERS OF YORE

Back in the good old days groceries were groceries and meat was meat and never the twain did meet until they got together in somebody's kitchen. You bought your flesh, fish or fowl in a butcher shop, your other foodstuffs in a grocery store and your shaving soap in neither one.

The old time meat market is an institution which has virtually vanished from the American scene. There are some left but they are few and far between.

In the days of our youth there were several such stores in Oneonta and we have vivid memories of them, for the meat market, or butcher shop, had a flavor and a personality all its own. Among the old time butchers we recall Billy Williams, Joe Hendy, John Brandow, Rufus J. Torrey, Conrad Spencer, Dominick Chicorelli and the Kenney brothers. There were others but those names are best remembered.

Billy Williams had his shop on Chestnut Street next to the theatre. He was succeeded by his nephew, Joe Hendy, whose father had conducted a market at East End. John Brandow had a store on Broad Street where Mac's Barber Shop now is.

Rufus J. Torrey held out for years at the corner of Main and Hamilton Avenue where Frew's Bakery is. Conrad (Coon) Spencer had a shop back of his home on Cherry Street. Chicorelli's market was in a wooden building standing where the entrance to the Post Office parking lot is. The Kenney Brothers were in the Exchange block on Dietz Street.

The stores were much alike as to interiors. There was a counter with scales and cash register. Chopping blocks of hard wood were provided for meat cutting. In one of the back corners was a large walk in "cooler".

Hanging from the ceiling would be chickens and other fowl. Along one wall were tubs and barrels containing salt pork, salt fish, pickled pigs feet, head cheese, oysters (out of their shells) and other delicacies. Hams and festoons of sausages gave a decorative effect.

The floor was generally covered with sawdust. The clerks were pretty apt to wear long, blood spattered white coats, and straw hats to protect against the chill of the refrigerator room.

When you asked for a steak the butcher would bring a side of beef out of the cooler, put it on a block and carve out the slice according to your specifications. The same was true of chops, roasts and other cuts. Soup bones and meat for your dog were free for the asking.

All the shops had free delivery service and the boy who brought your telephoned order was probably in training to be a butcher. It would take years, however, as the trade was highly skilled.

As time went by some butchers added groceries and meat began to appear in grocery stores. With the coming of the chain food stores the integration became complete.

The meat market was probably not too sanitary but generations of Americans survived that defect. There are many today who look back with nostalgia to the days when you could buy exactly the meat you wanted.

## WINSOR WAS LAURENS

There will be little disagreement with the assertion that for nearly half a century Laurens was Doc Winsor and Doc Winsor was Laurens, at least in the sense that very little of importance went on in our pleasant neighbor village in which the hand of this beloved physician could not be seen.

He ran village hall, the school system, his lodge and about everything else but there was little dissent, for his paternalism was benevolent and enlightened. His influence even extended to Oneonta, where he had many interests and was very well known.

Dr. Frank L. Winsor, scion of one of the oldest families in the valley, was born in Laurens on February 26, 1870, the son of Lester and Julia (Bissell) Winsor. He attended the village schools and then studied for a time at the Albany Business College.

Deciding to become a physician, he enrolled in Bellevue Hospital Medical School and received his degree from that institution in 1894. He had married Grace E. Hopkins in Laurens in 1891 and she lived in New York with him while he took his medical training.

Following his internship, Dr. Winsor returned to Laurens, where he followed his profession for fifty years. He was the old type physician who went to his patients no matter how inaccessible their homes might be and his practice covered a wide area of the countryside.

He was a widely known specialist in respiratory diseases and was frequently called as a consultant. The Otsego County Sanatorium at Mt. Vision resulted from his endeavors and he was its superintendent from the day it opened in 1918 until it was closed in 1941 a few years after Homer Folks Hospital was built.

Dr. Winsor served as the medical member of the local Exemption Board during World War I, giving hundreds of hours to that activity. He was health officer of Laurens for forty-two years and school physician for decades.

As trustee and village president for many years, Dr. Winsor helped secure electric lights and a water system for Laurens and saw the trolley road come and go. He was a member of the school board for twenty years and was its presiding officer for most of that period. It was under his leadership that the school was centralized.

Dr. Winsor became a director of the First National Bank of Oneonta when he was twenty-one years of age. When the affairs of that bank were taken over by the Citizens National Bank in 1911, he became a director of the latter institution and continued as such until his death in 1944.

A member of Laurens Masonic Lodge for years, Dr. Winsor became its Master and gave much time to its affairs, never being so happy as when working in its behalf. He was also an organizer of the Oneonta Country Club.

He had three children, Marian, who married Francis Casey and is now deceased, L. Coville Winsor of Syracuse and Mrs. Julia Winsor Getman of Oneonta.

Dr. Frank L. Winsor had a zest for life and a personality whose flavor was unique and distinctive. Those who knew him can never forget it; to those who never made his acquaintance it simply cannot be described in words.



## THAT FIRE IN '82

Fires have been a potent factor in altering Oneonta's skyline. In the years from 1880 to 1908 several bad conflagrations wiped out the wooden structures which once lined the business streets and forced the building of more substantial edifices.

One of the worst of these fires occurred on May 1, 1882, when a complex of buildings covering the ground bounded by Chestnut and Dietz Streets, the present Huntington Park and the rear of the Main Street blocks and houses, was swept by flames.

Where the Building and Loan building and the end of Wall Street now are, stood the residence of A. S. Miles and a small building owned by him. Next south, on the Windsor Hotel site, now occupied by the S&S and Montgomery Ward stores, was Barnes' Furniture Store, the upper story of which had once been occupied by the Masonic Lodge.

Next was the Cottage Hotel, run by Sid Ballard, and then came a building in which was the harness shop of D. A. Boardman. Between it and the Susquehanna House on the corner was the feed and grain store run by the Morris brothers, Albert and William.

Behind these buildings stood the stone village jail (similar in appearance to the present city bastille) and a maze of wooden structures, including Potter and Fleming's livery stable, the Susquehanna House barns, and a house and barn belonging to Solon Huntington.

The fire started in a paint shop at the rear of the Barnes store about 10:30 in the evening. According to a special edition of the Herald and Democrat published next day: "The streets were quickly filled with an anxious throng of inhabitants who found the steamer already in position near the reservoir at the foot of Dietz Street.

"Hose was laid and steam was on as quickly as possible, but the supply of water was quickly exhausted, and it soon became necessary to transfer the steamer to the reservoir in the rear of the fire house (site of present Municipal Building). This, with the adjustment of the hose, necessitated a considerable loss of time."

The loss of time was nearly disastrous. With no streams on it the fire spread rapidly and soon covered the entire area. The Susquehanna House and adjoining buildings on Main Street were in continual danger as were the stores across Chestnut Street.

The Susquehanna House seemed doomed but a bucket brigade and the use of wet blankets kept the flames under control until water from the fire house reservoir could be utilized. If this large building had gone it would probably have been impossible to save the "wooden row" across Main Street and most of Oneonta's business section would have been destroyed.

The Windsor Hotel was built the next year but it would be some time before Wall Street would be opened and buildings erected thereon.

## COW PASTURE SITES

When it was first proposed that the new senior high school be located on its present East Street site there was stiff opposition and opponents of the move delighted in calling the place the "cow pasture". That is exactly what it was but for that matter so once were the sites of every school in the city and the majority of our dwellings and business places.

Before the State Normal School was built in 1888 at the head of Maple Street the site was part of a dairy farm. The parents of many a present day Oneontan got their milk there at from three to four cents a quart.

As late as 1895 Walnut Street ended at Dietz and the region north and east of there was farm land. The farm house stood on Dietz Street where Walnut now crosses. When the latter street was extended through to Church the house was moved and is now 6 Walnut Street. Silver Creek flowed through the old barn yard.

The nearby Center Street School, erected in 1897, stands on a former pasture on that farm. The old wooden Union School building which stood on the Academy Street site now occupied by the Junior High School was built in 1868 on land which had been part of the farm of Timothy Watkins. Watkins Avenue and adjacent streets were carved out of this farm in 1870.

The Valleyview School stands on land that was once part of the Couse farm. A large spring on this farm located in the woods north of Main Street supplied water for most residents in the East End before the present water system was built.

For many years most of the territory now contained within the city limits was either under cultivation or trod by the hoofs of cattle or sheep. There was a series of farms extending in most cases from the hills to the river and with the dwellings standing north of Main Street. Among the farm owners were Watkins, Huntington, Ford, Morrell, Bronson, Yager, Walling and Couse.

In 1865 the only streets were Main, Chestnut, Maple, Dietz, River, Church, High, Academy and Grove. The latter four existed in part only, being extended to their present length in later years. Main, Dietz, Chestnut, Academy, River and perhaps Maple were the only thoroughfares that could boast of even a narrow sidewalk and that was usually confined to one side of the street.

The years from 1865 to 1872 witnessed the opening of many of our present streets, among them Ford, Elm, Walnut, Watkins, Grand, Division, Prospect, Center, Market and Broad.

If those who objected to the East Street location for the new school had insisted upon a site that was never a cow pasture, they would have had to settle for the railroad tracks east of the viaduct. Cows seldom ventured there. It was once a swamp.

## PAUL THE COLLECTOR

When William Christian Paul died in New York City in 1929 his heirs believed that they might inherit a tidy sum. It was not that the former Oneontan had received a big salary as an insurance clerk, but he had lived austere and they thought that he must have saved quite a bit of money.

Why he spent so many evenings alone in his bachelor apartment in the Bronx and what happened to his money become very clear when his will was probated and it was found that he had left to the Metropolitan Museum of Art a collection of such Chinese textiles as could be found nowhere else in the world save in the Imperial Palace Museum in Pekin.

This man of only moderate means had for years spent most of his income to satisfy his love of sheer beauty. The warm hues of a rich old robe from China's imperial court, the symbolism of an embroidery mellowed by age or the delicacy of ancient weaving—these things had an irresistible appeal for him.

It was estimated that Paul had spent about \$40,000 on his collection, which the Metropolitan now regards as almost priceless. It was his entire estate but the principal heir, Leland Paul, also a former Oneontan, did not contest the will but cooperated fully with the museum authorities.

William C. Paul was born in Albany in 1872. His father, George F. Paul, a railroad worker, brought the family to Oneonta when William was a small boy. Their home was on West Street.

Paul spent his boyhood and adolescence in Oneonta, attending the local schools and then learning the telegrapher's trade. In 1908 he took a trip around the world for his health and what he saw in the Far East gave him a deep love for oriental art, especially as manifested in textiles.

He went to New York soon after his return and became a clerk in the application department of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. As soon as he had saved enough, he started buying Chinese handicraft. By day he pursued his humdrum duties in the insurance office while at night he visited art dealers in search of the rare and the exotic or studied his treasures, which he kept in trunks and boxes, protected only by the locked door of his apartment.

Paul had few friends in the city except among art dealers, to whom he was well known. Often when they obtained a particularly fine specimen, first chance to buy would go to the quiet clerk rather than to the wealthy collectors.

Unlike many collectors, Paul did not rely upon the opinions of experts, buying what knowledge and experience had taught him was fine. The result was a collection of 1,065 pieces so unique and supreme that the Metropolitan devoted a year to its study before placing it on exhibition.

William Paul never forgot Oneonta, where he grew up. About his only social experiences were the meetings of the Klipnockie Boys, an organization of former Oneontans living in and about New York. He never missed the annual dinners.

Such is the story of a man who was undistinguished during his lifetime but who left to culture and knowledge a mighty contribution.



## OLD TIME INDUSTRIES

In *Volume Two* we told of the many factories which once flourished in Otsego County and of the varied products which they turned out. Let us take a look at some of these small but most interesting concerns.

Shoemakers all over the country once secured their lasts from a factory which Samuel and Mason Huntington started at Middlefield in 1824. It was the first factory of its kind in New York State. With the aid of only three men and an ingenious machine, the outfit turned out twenty-five thousand hard maple lasts a year.

Most of the brass harness fittings used by United States cavalry units during the War of 1812 came from the Cherry Valley Foundry, established by Oliver Judd in 1805 and carried on for more than a half century by his descendants. The foundry turned out annually about fifty tons of light castings, sleighbells and harness trappings.

Four generations of the Benjamin family once made fine furniture at Elm Grove, a small community near Morris on the road which cuts across the valley from the foot of Patrick Hill to the Garrattsville highway.

During the last half of the nineteenth century all manner of chairs, tables, bedsteads and other items of domestic furniture were turned out in this shop. Many of the expert craftsmen had learned their trades in the "old country".

Leatherstocking Brook, a small stream north of Cooperstown, furnished power for several small industries a century and more ago. It is believed that the gristmill built below the falls by Stephen Smith was the first in the area. Johnson's sawmill was also built below the falls.

At the brink there was another sawmill and farther up the stream was a carding mill operated by Joseph Perkins. In this building Caleb Thayer made "Patent Lead Aqueduct Pipe", according to his announcements.

The pipe was made in eight foot lengths which were joined together as required. That this pipe was of excellent quality is attested by the fact that a few years ago a length that had been in use for over a hundred years was uncovered and found to be still in excellent condition.

In the Pierstown section farther up the creek were other gristmills and sawmills and where the stream leaves the foot of Mount Otsego there was once a brewery, the only one ever to be operated in Otsego County. It was built in 1816 by a native Scot, David Patten.

A concern manufacturing fancy combs was operated for some years at Milford by Prosper Stewart. An advertisement in the *Freeman's Journal* in 1821 stated that the proprietor "respectfully informs the public that he carries on the business of Fancy Comb Manufacturer where all orders in this line will receive the earliest attention and any quantity of combs furnished at his shop on the shortest notice". He also offered to pay cash for twenty thousand ox-horns. In a later ad he said that he was seeking "six active lads from fourteen to sixteen years of age" as apprentices.

There were many more of these small industries which once made the county an industrial center.

## BOY PIONEERS

The need for an organization for lads under Boy Scout age had long been felt in Oneonta and when in April of 1916 two Hamilton College students, Ernest S. Griffith and Edwin R. Moore, spoke to groups of boys and their parents and urged the formation of a troop of Pioneers of America, the response was immediate. Soon two troops were in operation with Edward Gesswein of the Normal faculty and Walter M. Goldsmith as Pioneermasters.

The story of the Pioneer movement, which was the forerunner of the Cub Scouts, is an interesting one for no venture of its kind ever grew quite so fast. Starting from a small boys' club in Clinton the movement ballooned in less than three years into a national organization with four hundred troops in fourteen states.

Ernie Griffith had a great desire to be a Rhodes scholar. Athletic ability, scholarship and outstanding leadership are necessary qualifications for this honor. He was a fine student and had no fears there. He had never been an athlete but he went out for the track team and by hard work became an adequate distance runner.

To qualify in the leadership category Griffith decided to form a new kind of boys' club. The Scout movement was growing fast but there was no organization for younger lads. He started such a club in Clinton, where Hamilton is located, and soon school officials in Utica were asking that similar clubs be formed in their schools.

Early in 1915 Griffith enlisted the aid of a number of his fellow students and the group created an organization similar to the Boy Scouts but designed for boys from nine to twelve. A national organization was formed with the famous Judge Ben B. Lindsey as honorary president.

The active national officers were all Hamilton students. Griffith was the chief executive. We were privileged to be national publicity secretary, working with Philip C. Jessup, later to be chief U. S. delegate to the United Nations.

A handbook and a volume of songs and games were published. A pin was designed and manufactured and an oath, a sign and a motto devised. Within three months there were one hundred troops in six states and by the time World War I interrupted activities there were over four hundred troops in fourteen states, including Texas and California.

The movement grew fast in Oneonta after that day when Griffith and Moore launched the project there.

In July a camp was held on the Susquehanna near Colliers under the supervision of YMCA Secretary Reid Snyder and with the following boys in attendance: Harold Keen, Ralph Parish, Francis Boshea, Lawrence Townsend, Sanford Haines, LaVerne Trinkino, Sumner Shove, Robert and Duncan Briggs, Ivan Jaynes, Clifford Brown, Daniel Harrington, James Matteson, Lloyd Berner, Berkly Swart, Donald Charles, Allen Spencer, Gerald Lee and Glenn Bordinger.

All of the national officers went into service during World War I and the Pioneers of America became quiescent. After the war the Boy Scout organization was granted permission to use the Pioneer ideas and upon this foundation built the Cub Scout movement. The Pioneers of America, having served its purpose, passed from the scene.

## WOMAN OF MYSTERY

She had probably never heard of beef Stroganoff and vichyssoise was just a funny looking word to her, but she had a certain way with a hamburger and her french fries were perfection itself. If your budget permitted a steak, it came to the table just as you wanted it.

Yes, Mary Wright was a good cook and well she should be, for she worked in the Unadilla House kitchen for twenty-seven years. During that time she met hundreds of people but no one really knew her. She was pleasant enough but not one of her acquaintances could break through her shell of reticence and reserve.

From before dawn to well after dusk she worked, year after year. When she was considerably beyond middle age she bought a farm two miles from Unadilla. After the midday meal she would walk to her acres and spend the afternoon at hard physical labor in the fields and barn.

Before nightfall she would trudge back to the hotel for another session amid the pots and pans. As she tramped along through the mud or snow, clad in dark garments and often rubber-booted, she was a sinister figure of uncertain origin and mysterious destination.

Sometimes, when in the mood, the woman would array herself in brightly hued clothing. It was said that years before, when she was young and pretty, she had been deeply in love. Maybe so, but no one knew for sure.

Everyone thought that she had plenty of money salted away as she had worked at good wages for many years and apparently had spent little. She had never married and evidently had no close kinfolk and there was much speculation as to where her money would go when she died.

Once she had told Rev. Yale Lyon that she might join the Episcopal Church. Could it be that she would leave her wealth to St. Matthew's? All she would ever say, when questioned about it, was: "Wait and see."

As the years added their weight, she spoke often of death. She would explain that she was not afraid of the dissolution which was fast approaching; it was the thought of being buried in the cold ground that haunted her. She was believed to be part Indian and possibly in her sub-conscious mind was the idea that her ancestors placed their dead on scaffolds. If so, her forebears were Plains Indians for the redskins hereabouts never engaged in this practice.

Curiosity was at a high peak when one day a half dozen workmen appeared in the Sidney cemetery on the hill flanking the back road to Unadilla. Trucks brought marble and granite to the site and in due time a mausoleum was completed, the largest anywhere in the vicinity. Above the door the workers carved in tall letters, "MARY M. WRIGHT."

The owner furnished the vault's interior with rugs, a table and chairs, making of it a macabre sitting room where she spent considerable time, swaying back and forth in her rocking chair, with what thoughts no one knew.

In late 1931 death came at last to Mary M. Wright and the crypt on the hill became her final abode. Of the thousands of dollars she had saved, only enough were left to pay her funeral expenses. Her earthly sojourn had ended but the questions which her strange life evoked stayed on, unanswered.



## WILBER AND WATER

George I. Wilber had no part in organizing the Oneonta Water Works Company and that fact irked him. Furthermore, the officers, William W. Snow, John Cope and M. L. Keyes, were all connected with his rival, the First National Bank, and that situation was intolerable.

His chance came, however, as he knew it would. The canny cashier of the Wilber National Bank was one of the first to be solicited to buy stock in the new venture. He said that he would take the subscription paper to his father David for his signature as well as his own.

When the paper was returned it was found that the Wilbers had subscribed for all the stock not yet taken. This gave them a majority interest and transferred control from the First National to the Wilber National Bank.

That was in 1881 and from then until his death in 1922 George I. Wilber controlled the water supply of the community. The company was originally capitalized at \$40,000 with 400 shares at \$100 each. The capitalization was increased several times through the years. In 1907 Mr. Wilber and his wife held 1,430 of the 2,000 shares then outstanding. If the same proportion held true when the stock was first issued, George I. and David Wilber held 286 shares of the original 400.

A water system had been advocated for many years before action was taken. It would appear that water for fire fighting was the main consideration, little being said about householders, who were then getting their water from wells and springs.

Harvey Baker was one of the first promoters of the idea. In 1873 he wrote a letter to the editor of the Oneonta Herald in which he suggested:

"Three plans, either of which would supply an ample amount of water, and with sufficient force. 1) A supply from wells, and forced by water power from near the mills, or from near Conrad Wolfe's bridge, upon the principle now used in Philadelphia. 2) From wells forced by steam power as at Binghamton. 3) From the streams or lakes within reach, as at Delhi, Glens Falls, etc."

He made an offer to the village to build a reservoir for \$10,000 if the third plan was adopted. The next year the Oneonta Water Works Company was incorporated but it did nothing toward building a water system.

In 1876 there was agitation for the buying of a steam fire engine. Mr. Baker again wrote to the Herald, stating that without an adequate water supply the engine would be useless. He said: "My first move would be to bring the water from the Oneonta Creek in sufficient quantity and from such height as would from hydrants perfectly flood, if necessary, any building within its reach in the village."

In 1880 the water company was reincorporated and things got under way. In another story we told of the building of the two reservoirs, the lower in 1882 and the upper one six years later.

But Harvey Baker was not through. He said that the water after its use could not be piled like cordwood and he advocated a sewer system. The first pipes in this system were laid in 1887 on Ford Avenue from Main Street to the foot of the hill.

## ALMOST BUT NOT QUITE

Cooperstown has been the shire town ever since Otsego County was formed 173 years ago but there was a time when the beautiful village might well have lost the distinction of being the county seat. That was in 1879 when the town of Oneonta offered to provide a site and construct a courthouse at no cost to the rest of the county.

Otsego County was created from Montgomery in 1791 and originally included much of Delaware County and half of Schoharie. Cooperstown was selected as the seat of government. Cherry Valley, an older and then larger village, made a strong bid and John Christopher Hartwick tried to secure the honor for his domain but Cooperstown prevailed.

The first courthouse was built in 1791 on the southeast corner of Main and Pioneer Streets. The first story, of squared logs, housed the jail while the courtroom was on the frame second floor. The stocks and whipping post stood in front. A tavern was constructed on the same lot and the jury rooms were conveniently located there.

In 1807 this courthouse was replaced by a brick building located near the site of the present county offices. This structure, which also housed the jail, burned in 1840 and was at once rebuilt.

After nearly forty years of use the courthouse showed such signs of deterioration that its collapse was feared. It was condemned as unsafe by the Board of Supervisors in 1878 and court sessions were held elsewhere. At this juncture of affairs, Walter L. Brown offered, in the name of the town of Oneonta, to provide a site in Oneonta village and to erect a building at a cost of \$20,000.

Early in 1879 the Board appointed a committee of five supervisors to investigate the offer. Henry G. Wood, who had replaced Brown as supervisor from the town of Oneonta, was on this committee and he raised the town's proposal to \$50,000, offering surety that the money would be available.

Wood's argument centered around the fact that Oneonta was more accessible to the southern towns, which contained three-fifths of the population of the county. The committee voted three to two to reject Oneonta's offer and the full Board sustained the majority report by a vote of twenty to three.

But the controversy, which had been raging for weeks from forum and press, was not yet resolved. The solons voted to appropriate \$10,000 for the courthouse if the town of Otsego, which included Cooperstown, would match the amount. For a time it appeared that the money could not be raised and that Oneonta would win by default. Eventually the Board raised its ante to \$15,000 and reduced Otsego's share to \$5,000. That sum was soon raised and the court house, which is still in use, was built in 1880.

Some years before, in 1866, there was an abortive attempt to form a new county. A resolution was passed at an Oneonta town meeting proposing a new county named "Susquehanna" and composed of the towns of Worcester, Decatur, Westford, Maryland, Milford, Laurens, Morris, Butternuts, Unadilla, Otsego and Oneonta, with the county seat here. This trial balloon never got off the ground.

## THOSE TELEPHONES

John Brown, an Oneonta merchant back in 1882, considered himself fortunate. He had just had one of those new fangled telephones installed and now he could talk to twenty-five other subscribers without leaving his shop. That was almost inconceivable then but if Brown were here today he could use his phone to talk with countless millions of people.

Late in 1881 L. L. Keyes, an agent for the American Bell Telephone Company, advertised in the Herald that he would provide "telephonic communications" if he could get twenty-five subscribers. He signed up twenty-six and work on the system started.

Service began on June 9, 1882. The exchange, known as the Oneonta division of the Mohawk Valley Telephone and Telegraph Company, was located in the front corner room on the second floor of the new Ford and Stewart block at the corner of Main and Broad. The equipment was of the magneto or hand crank type and there were two local and one long distance positions on the switchboard.

Keyes and his wife managed the exchange, which gave service from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. on weekdays only. In 1883 the closing hour was extended to 12:30 a.m. Two years later all night service was started. A male operator slept in and was awakened (perhaps) by a bell when a call came in.

The list of subscribers grew steadily and in 1895 more room was needed and the plant was moved to the Reynolds block at the corner of Main and Chestnut. At this time operators started at \$3 a week. Boys worked the night shift.

Competition came in 1897 with the formation of the Oneonta Telephone Company. The officers of this locally financed outfit were W. H. Smith, W. W. Capron, E. W. Elmore and J. F. Thompson. Its office was in the Westcott (town clock) block.

In 1904 the older company, at that time known as the Central New York Telephone and Telegraph Company, bought the new group and merged it with its central office. Two years later the company built a two story block (later to be enlarged) on Dietz Street and moved thereto.

At this time rates were increased from one dollar to two dollars per month. Much dissatisfaction arose and the next year a rival company, the Home Telephone Company, was formed. Its exchange was on the second floor of the Ronan block, now a part of Bresee's.

The Home Company offered four party service and set a precedent by putting its telephone lines underground in the business section. It also offered service at a dollar a month and took away many of its rival's subscribers. The result was that business houses had to have two phones.

The pioneer company had Bell backing, however, and in the price war which followed, it won easily and in 1912 bought out the Home Company. In 1932 the company, by then known as the Otsego and Delaware Telephone Company, merged with the New York Telephone Company.

Since then the company has progressed rapidly. In 1957 a new central office, one of the best in the Bell system, was built on Elm Street, and the installation of a dial system followed.

In eighty-two years Oneonta's telephone system has grown from twenty-six subscribers to nearly seven thousand and the staff managing it from two to one hundred and ten.



## INDIAN VACATIONS

"The sun is high in the heavens and much heat is on the land. I long for the sweet waters and gentle breezes of the camp at the headwaters of the Onahrenton. Prepare packs and get the children ready, for we start in the morning and will not return until the corn is ready for harvest."

Thus might an Indian brave residing at Adequentaga or at any other of the villages along the upper Susquehanna have announced to his spouse that the family was about to take its summer vacation. Just as does the white man today, the red-skin tired of the restraint and monotony of village life and longed for the more pleasant existence at a summer camp.

Adequentaga, at the mouth of the Charlotte; Wahtega, at the juncture of the Otego; Tionadeloga, where the Schenevus flows into the Susquehanna; and all the other villages had two or three outlying camps where the Indians went regularly for rest and recreation.

These summer camps were always located handy to good hunting and fishing areas. A pleasant location, generally with a good view, was apparently another requisite. The artifacts found on these camp sites clearly indicate the type of life led there. Very few pestles, nutstones or other tools are found while pipes and articles of personal adornment are numerous. Sunstones are found since the Powers had to be invoked as usual. Stone lancets and other adjuncts of the healer's arts are a not uncommon find.

A certain amount of light industry was carried on at the camps. Skins were prepared and garments made as is evidenced by the finding of needles and small skin dressing tools. Arrow points were produced and some pottery if there was a clay deposit nearby.

One of the most interesting summer resorts is the one at the head of the Onahrenton, the name given by the Indians to Oneonta Creek. The site is near Kelly's Corners about a mile above the Upper Reservoir. Here is a small meadow in a shallow basin where once was a pond. The camp site occupied an acre or two of land lying on either side of the outlet of the old lake.

In the past this site must have presented an unusually attractive aspect. To the west can be seen the hills bordering the Otego Valley while eastward are the high summits of the range along the upper Susquehanna. To the south is the shallow, narrow valley of the Oneonta Creek. The pond of spring water, once walled in by massive pines, was probably full of trout while pond lilies attracted the deer. There are several cold springs nearby.

This is a Third Period Algonquin site although there must have been Indians of a later period (probably Mohawks) there at one time. Many arrow points of the typically Iroquoian triangular shape have been found.

At Emmons Lake on the crest of the hill about a mile southwest of the Adequentaga village site was another camp area. This pond is now partly filled with sphagnum moss and other vegetable matter but at the time of the Indian occupation it was a shining lake.

Years ago considerable evidence was found of a camp site in Oneonta about where Silver Creek crosses Clinton Street.

## HEALTHY ONEONTA

"Its salubrious atmosphere and beautiful scenery, together with its pure air, combine to make Oneonta a favorite and healthy place of residence. The tables of mortality treating upon this are conclusive of the superiority on this point of this community."

Probably at no time in its history has Oneonta been adverse to having industry settle here and at intervals through the years the local newspapers have published trade editions extolling the virtues of the community and setting forth its advantages as a manufacturing center. We have before us such an edition of the *Oneonta Herald*, a weekly journal, published in April of 1906.

We are not aware that Oneonta has had any reputation in the past as a health center yet this edition devotes considerable space to an exposition of the advantage to a manufacturer of locating in a community where, apparently, there was little disease and where old age was evidently the big killer.

Strangely enough, however, the paper took pains to point out that the village had a fine new hospital, a sufficiency of physicians and pharmacists, and a normal quota of undertakers and cemeteries.

The writers declared that "The business structures are well built and prosperous looking, while the residences and public buildings vie in taste and finish with any in the State" and go on to say that "Oneonta has appropriately been called 'A City of Homes'. Rents are fair and building comparatively cheap. The price of real estate here today is low, considering its value and the prospect of appreciation."

The dissertation ends on a high note: "The future of Oneonta is bright with the bow of promise. Our capitalists and business men will be found neither stubbornly conservative nor rashly aggressive, but pursue a policy resulting in the establishment of a solid foundation."

It should not be inferred from the above that Oneonta was desperate for industry because it was in an economic slough. As a matter of fact business was booming in 1906. The D.&H. was expanding rapidly, the cigar manufacturing industry was paying high wages to several hundred people and the prosperity of the farmer meant money in the tills of the retail merchants.

Most of the issue is taken up with sketches of Oneonta business men and descriptions of their establishments. On the front page we learn about the furniture and undertaking business of Clifford Morris and Benjamin Packer and glean interesting facts about Carr and Bull, "Clothing, Hats and Furnishings". This concern, founded in 1884 as Bennett and Carr, is the ancestor of Henderson's.

Here is described the crockery and glassware store of Lauren and Rowe, a perfect paradise for a bull with its narrow aisles flanked by tables piled high with fragile merchandise.

Elsewhere we learn of Gilbert Bligh, whose men's furnishings store was in the Stanton Opera House block at the corner of Main and Chestnut. There is a story that Gib Bligh would walk a mile or so up Main Street each morning and catch a ride back on some farmer's rig. By the time he had reached his store the enterprising merchant would have talked the driver into buying a year's supply of clothing.

## THOSE POOR TEACHERS

"Men teachers may take one evening a week for courting purposes, or two evenings a week if they attend church regularly."

Those who think that government puts too many restrictions upon their freedom of action should take a long look at the rules which circumscribed the private lives of teachers in 1872. The rule quoted above was one of nine promulgated in that dark age by the State of New York for the guidance of instructors.

The nature of the times made necessary the first three rules. There was no central heating back in 1872, the electric light had not yet been invented and Otsego's Lewis Waterman was still to manufacture the first fountain pen.

"1. Teachers each day will fill lamps, clean chimneys and clean wicks."

"2. Each teacher will bring a bucket of water and a scuttle of coal for the day's session."

"3. Make your pens carefully. You may whittle nibs for the individual tastes of the pupils."

Rule four was the one allowing the male mentor to escape occasionally from the second floor back bedroom of Mrs. Brown's rooming house. The next regulation concerned what teachers should do after they had completed their ten hour stint in the little red schoolhouse. The laboring man also worked ten hours a day but after the whistle blew he could rush the growler, play dominoes or lose himself in a dime thriller. Not so the poor teacher.

"5. After ten hours in school, teachers should spend the remaining time reading the Bible or other good books."

Today thousands of women combine successfully the roles of wife and teacher, but not in 1872. It was either one or the other, period!

"6. Women teachers who marry or engage in unseemly conduct will be dismissed."

This "unseemly conduct" business was defined for the male preceptor in no uncertain terms.

"7. Each teacher who smokes, uses liquor in any form, frequents pool or public halls, or gets shaved in a barber shop, will give good reason to suspect his worth, intentions, integrity and honesty."

In a day when there was no teacher's retirement fund and no social security, the following dictum made considerable sense:

"8. Each teacher should lay aside from each pay a goodly sum of his earnings for his benefit during his declining years so he will not become a burden on society."

The last rule outlined the teacher's award for obeying to the letter the other regulations. It was the spur to diligent performance of his duties.

"9. The teacher who performs his labors faithfully and without fail for five years will be given an increase of twenty-five cents per week in his pay providing the Board of Education approves."

Those rules constituted the law of the state in respect to the actions of those who instructed the young in those halcyon times. Do we hear any teacher asking for a return of the good old days?



## *FARONE THE PADRONE*

He had only \$1.75 in his pocket and not a word of English in his head when he landed in New York one April morning in 1881, but he was only twenty-two, in good health and this was America, where a fortune could be made in no time at all.

Undoubtedly Joseph Farone did not find things as rosy as they had been pictured to him before he left his native Italy, but he did find a job and when he died in Oneonta at the age of seventy-nine he left a good family, a host of friends, a fine reputation and a comfortable amount of this world's goods.

Joseph Farone, the second person of Italian origin to settle in Oneonta and for years the community's most prominent citizen of that race, was born in 1857 in Alvignano, a small town about thirty miles north of Naples. He emigrated to America in 1881, leaving his bride, the former Speranza Rossi, to follow later.

Why he decided to go to Albany is not clear but he spent a dollar of his limited funds for a ticket on the day boat and was soon in the capital city. He got a job as a section hand on the Delaware & Hudson railroad and was sent to Oneonta, which would be his home for the remainder of his life.

His first work was on the construction of a second track between Sidney and Bainbridge. He worked seven days a week from dawn to dusk and each Saturday was paid \$7.35. Before long he was promoted to assistant foreman. He learned English rapidly and was soon made an interpreter and given the task of procuring laborers for the road.

Joseph Farone was to hold that position for over a quarter of a century. He brought scores of Italian immigrants to Oneonta and put them to work on the D.&H. But he did more for his fellow countrymen than just secure jobs for them. He was their mentor, their banker and their big brother.

If one of his flock looked too long upon the wine when it was red and ran afoul of the law, he got the man out of his difficulty. If a little cash was needed until payday, Joe Farone saw that it was forthcoming. He found them places to live and guided them toward a good home life.

Oneonta was a strongly Republican village in those days and Mr. Farone saw to it that his charges voted "under the chicken" as soon as they acquired citizenship. The party could always rely upon him for a good sized block of Italian votes.

Joseph Farone retired from the railroad in 1913. Some years before, he had opened a grocery store at the corner of South Main and Prospect Streets and a saloon next to it. The latter was a popular rendezvous for the business and professional men of the town. Mr. Farone devoted the rest of his years to these enterprises and to the pleasures of his home.

He had sent for his wife as soon as he had established himself in Oneonta and they raised a family of nine children. Four are now living, Vincent in Watervliet and Edith, Magdeline and Albert in Oneonta.

The Farones first lived in a house on Prospect Street adjoining the tavern and grocery. Later Mr. Farone bought the house at 52 Elm Street which has been the family home for several decades.

## HEALERS OF OLD

The physician or surgeon of today practices his art under conditions which his predecessor of a hundred or even fifty years ago could not possibly imagine. Except for dedication to the profession, today's men of medicine have little in common with those who practiced in olden times.

The good old days were pretty bad when judged by present medical standards. Today you go to your physician's office and are examined by a man possessed of knowledge which did not exist a half century ago and are treated with drugs and medicines totally unknown to the old time healer.

During yesteryear the doctor went to you, on horseback or by buckboard, through snow and ice; dust, rain and mud. His black bag contained little that would be usable today. If he had to operate, he did so on the kitchen table, with the housewife's apron protecting his clothing. His instruments were crude and antisepsis was an unknown word.

Oneonta's pioneer physician was Dr. Joseph Lindsay who settled here in 1807 and practiced for over half a century. He was joined in 1829 by Dr. Samuel H. Case, who made his rounds for sixty-one years and in 1839 by Dr. Hosea Hamilton, who practiced the same number of years. The latter's office was where Sears is now.

Since then scores of medical practitioners have come and gone in Oneonta. We shall discuss a few whom we recall from the days of our youth.

Dr. Ozias W. Peck practiced here for fifty years and was village health officer for a long period. Dr. Ezra McDougal was a dour Scot who lived on Grand Street. We can still see this old gentleman bicycling through the streets, stove pipe hat on head and bag in one hand while he steered with the other.

Drs. D. B. Manchester, B. A. Church, A. A. Reid, O. C. Tarbox, Edgar D. VanCleft and George J. VanVechten were well remembered general practitioners of our boyhood. Dr. Gilbert S. Olin had an early automobile, of a make not recalled, with a detachable tonneau entered by steps and a door in the rear.

Dr. Albert D. Getman was a public spirited physician who delivered many of the babies of the time and who was also a prime mover in the construction of the first electric trolley line.

Dr. Julian C. Smith was another with a sense of public duty. He was an assemblyman and served in World War I. Dr. Arthur H. Brownell had a distinguished medical and civic career. And there were Drs. J. M. McClellan, Seth Mereness, H. W. Paige, Stanton Hendrick, George Simmons and Daniel Luce, Sr. And, of course, there was the incomparable Dr. Marshall Latcher.

Drs. Arthur W. Cutler, Francis J. McMenamin, David H. Mills, Charles R. Marsh and George W. Augustin were all veterans of World War I. They will be remembered not only for their medical skill but for the contributions they made to the color and vigor of the English language.

There were others, of course, but these we remember best from our early days. They were men of dedication who gave much to the community through their skill and human qualities.

## TABLES AND CHAIRS

That extension table or kitchen chair which you bought at an auction last summer might very well have been made right here in Oneonta, for the manufacture of chairs and tables was an important industry here seventy-five years ago.

When the business was at its peak about 1888, the Oneonta Table Company turned out twenty thousand tables of various sorts annually while the Oneonta Chair Company shipped each month about fifteen thousand chairs of many varieties. The two concerns gave employment to approximately a hundred men and had a combined payroll of \$70,000. This was an average of \$700 a year per person, a very good wage in those days.

The table outfit was organized early in 1885 as the Guy Table Company, with a capital stock of \$10,000. The first directors were Reuben Reynolds, William H. Morris, Willard E. Yager, E. R. Ford, Jr., and Burdette Guy, all well known local business men. Reynolds was president and Guy the general manager.

The company was organized to make an extension dining table which Guy had perfected but other types were soon added to the line. The first factory was the old Columbian roller skating rink on Market Street where the bus terminal and the parking lot are now.

Oak and ash were the principal woods used and most of the raw material came from the dense forests which covered the hills surrounding the village. Some of the tables were sold locally but most went to jobbers elsewhere.

Early in 1888 the plant was moved to a newly built factory on the west side of Rose Avenue near the railroad tracks. The capital stock was increased to \$20,000 and the name changed to Oneonta Table Company.

In October of 1894 fire destroyed the building and its contents. At that time the directors were Messrs. Reynolds and Morris, W. L. Brown, Frank Gould and D. F. Wilber. The insurance covered only about half the loss and the factory was not rebuilt.

The company which made chairs began business January 1, 1887, under the name of Sawin and Conant, most of the capital coming from outside Oneonta. A few months later the firm was incorporated as the Oneonta Chair Company.

The company's factory was across the tracks at the foot of Rose Avenue in the buildings now occupied by the Otsego Iron and Metal Corporation. Here some twenty styles of chairs were manufactured, ranging from cheap kitchen chairs to the more expensive spring rockers.

Some complete chairs were turned out but most of the output was shipped to New York in the form of bundles of seats, backs and legs and assembled there. The seats were caned by Oneonta women in their homes, the rate of pay ranging from five cents to fifteen cents per chair.

About fifty-five men were regularly employed in the plant with fifteen others in the woods to cut and transport the ash, oak and hard maple timber from which the chairs were made.

The company went out of business in 1892 and the plant was acquired by the McCammon Piano Company. The buildings were later used by a company manufacturing silk cloth.



## TROLLEY TROUBLE

When the Oneonta, Cooperstown and Richfield Springs electric railway reached Mohawk late in 1904 and the Susquehanna and Mohawk valleys were at last united, promotor Herbert T. Jennings drew a deep sigh of relief. He knew that financial trouble lay ahead but the construction difficulties were over.

The route was only fifty-six miles long but about every kind of trouble had been experienced. There had been strikes and riots, mortal accidents and a fatal shooting. Injunctions had stopped workmen and cows had derailed trains.

At a spot near Fly Creek laborers came to work morning after morning to find that the fill they had made the day before had disappeared, leaving the rails and ties suspended in air. And to top it all, on three occasions steam locomotives used in construction had collided head on with electric cars, probably the only incidents of this kind in the annals of railroading.

The line reached Richfield in 1902 and for some time the terminus was at the fair grounds just south of the village. The builders and most of the townspeople wanted the line to go through the village by way of Lake and Main Streets but a strong minority opposed, fearing that the cars would frighten horses and endanger life. They threatened an injunction.

Jennings assembled rails, ties and other material at the fair grounds together with about three hundred men and seventy teams. Early on June 13 work was started. Opposition leaders hurried to Cooperstown to secure an injunction but the county judge was out of town (Jennings was accused of knowing this) and the work continued day and night until finished.

In June of 1903 when the road was being built from Richfield to Mohawk, workmen became incensed because they had not been paid for over a month. They blocked the tracks on both sides of Richfield, allowing no traffic in either direction. The impasse continued for two weeks until the men were paid.

Unpaid back wages resulted in serious trouble again later that year. Workmen waylaid train No. 19 just south of Hartwick and blocked the track on either side. A few hours later an attempt was made to rescue Conductor James Ward and Motor-man Fred Sheldon who were on the kidnapped car. A relief train carrying Jennings, Sheriff Mather and a party of deputies was dispatched to the southmost barrier.

When the group tried to remove the obstructions from the rails, the workers attacked with sticks, stones and knives. Soon rifles and shotguns came into play and a real battle ensued. The riotors were finally subdued but only after their leader had been killed and many persons on both sides wounded.

Upon one occasion the traffic manager, the master mechanic and the engineers at the Hartwick powerhouse resigned in a body because an improperly worded memorandum had caused them to believe they were about to be dismissed. With no power and no direction, both traffic and construction stopped until the matter could be straightened out.

So it went, with each day bringing its problems both of construction and of the operation of those portions of the railroad which were open to traffic. But at last the line was finished, but only the good Lord knew how.

## *IT DID NO GOOD*

There are men in Oneonta who have not spoken to each other in forty years although once they were friends and worked side by side. There are wounds in the city's economic and social structures which are so deep that they have never healed although four decades have passed since they were inflicted.

And the tragedy is that it was unnecessary. The national strike of railroad shop workers which split Oneonta wide open during half of 1922 and all of 1923 had no point locally and all that resulted was frustration, bitterness and loss to labor, management and the public alike.

The main issue involved the practice of contracting to outside firms work which the unions thought should be done in the railroad shops. The United States Railway Labor Board had condoned this system and had also authorized a reduction in wages.

The issues had no local application. The D.&H. had never used the contract system and had assured the shopmen that if they did not strike there would be no wage reductions. The strike which was voted by the Federated Shop Unions on the D.&H. lines was, therefore, purely a sympathy strike.

On July 1, 1922, nearly 400,000 railroad shopmen quit work throughout the country. In Oneonta about 800 machinists, boilermakers, carpenters and other workers laid down their tools and left their work benches, most of them never to return.

The D.&H. issued an ultimatum stating that those not back at work by July 10 would lose their seniority and that their reemployment would be at the discretion of the railroad. The ranks of the strikers held remarkably firm, however. As the weeks went by a few returned to work but they were marked men. "Scab" was painted on their walks and their families were ostracized.

The strike had been anticipated and as the men quit, their places were quickly filled with strikebreakers. The Wilson House at the corner of Chestnut and Market Streets was rented to house the skilled workers and wooden barracks and a mess hall were erected in the railroad yards for the remainder.

Some of the strikebreakers were men who were on strike from other railroads in the east. Many others were rough and ready charactres who were not the most desirable kind of citizens.

There were no strike benefits and most of the strikers had to find immediate employment. Many left Oneonta, not to return. Much bitterness was engendered and there were many minor clashes but there were no outbursts of violence which the local and railroad police could not handle. The hard feeling worked its way into the fraternal, social, religious and business life of the community and persisted for decades.

As the months passed the strike was settled on road after road but not on the D.&H. Finally, in December of 1923, the long struggle ended here. A few men returned to work but with seniority and other rights gone.

In one sense the strike was over but in the minds and hearts of many Oneontans it is still going on. The city was never again the bustling, booming railroad town it had been for so long. Something was gone.

## JARED GOODYEAR

If the D.&H. shops had been located in Colliers instead of Oneonta as he had hoped, Jared Goodyear would have made a mint of money, since he owned most of the land in the vicinity. As it was, when he died in 1874 he left the largest estate which had ever been accumulated in Otsego County.

Although he made his home in the pleasant hamlet to the east of us, he owned much property in Oneonta and had many interests here. He left his mark upon the village and upon the valley as few men have.

Jared Goodyear was born in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1792. When he was still a child the family moved to Locke, Cayuga County, where he attended a log school. One of his schoolmates was Millard Fillmore, a future president of the United States.

The Goodyears later moved to Albany and the father conducted for some time a tavern on the Great Western Turnpike. Jared received his first business training there, running a small store when only 13 or 14 years old.

The family then moved to a farm near Lawyersville and Jared became interested in the cattle business. On one buying trip he stayed at the famous inn at Colliers run by Peter Collier. This hostelry was built in 1816 and, much altered, is now the restaurant known as "The Homestead".

Here Goodyear met and fell in love with Collier's daughter, Ann Eliza. They were married in 1822 and the bridegroom entered into partnership with his father-in-law. Peter Collier was the son of Isaac Collier, one of the first settlers in the county, and was a man of substance who owned considerable land.

The firm of Collier and Goodyear engaged in extensive logging operations and sent many rafts down the river to Baltimore. They also had a large mercantile and agricultural business, in addition to running the tavern.

Soon they built a gristmill and a sawmill on the river about where the Colliers Dam now stands. Peter Collier died in 1846 and Goodyear continued the enterprises and also conducted a banking business in Schoharie.

Jared Goodyear became interested early in a railroad down the valley. He was one of the original incorporators of the Albany and Susquehanna Railroad (now the D.&H.) and was for some time its vice-president.

In 1829 Collier and Goodyear bought the McDonald Mills in Oneonta and made extensive improvements to the gristmill. In 1851 Goodyear sold the mills to Maurice Elwell but retained his other land holdings in the vicinity. At one time he owned all of the left hand frontage of Main Street from the railroad tracks to the river as well as the land now known as Wilcox Flats.

Goodyear was the first postmaster of Colliersville (the postoffice was so named but the railroad station was Colliers) and held that position for 35 years. He represented the town of Milford as supervisor for seven years. In 1867 he built a large hotel (still standing) at Colliers and this was a popular inn until well into the present century.

Jared Goodyear died in 1874 and was buried in the Collier private cemetery. Many years later his granddaughter, Ella Lyman, had the bodies moved to Glenwood Cemetery in Oneonta.



## THE FORDS GO BY

Although Eliakim Reed Ford had ten children who lived to maturity, not a drop of his blood runs in the veins of any present resident of the city of Oneonta and only one descendant lives in the immediate area.

Elsewhere we have told the story of this merchant, banker, farmer, railroad promoter and politician whose home was the famous Stone Mansion on the site of the Wilber Bank. Who were his children and what part did they play in the life of the community?

Eleven children were born between 1824 and 1851 to E. R. Ford and his wife Harriet, the daughter of Ira Emmons, another Oneonta pioneer. Ellen, the fourth child, died in infancy, and Helen, the fifth, never married.

Imogene married Erastus Hopkins, Julia became the wife of Clifford Arms and both moved away from Oneonta. Raymond, after service during the Civil War with the 3rd N. Y. Cavalry, settled in Washington, D. C., where he spent the rest of his life in federal service. The other six children spent their lives in Oneonta and were among its most prominent citizens.

Jane Ford, the oldest, married E. D. Saunders, brother-in-law of Collis P. Huntington and uncle of Henry E. They lived at the northwest corner of Elm and Walnut Streets. Henry Saunders, long prominent in Oneonta, was their son.

DeWitt was the oldest son. He was a merchant and manufacturer who lived for years in a house on Main Street directly facing Broad. Among his eight children were Edward E., who lived at 13 Walnut Street and was a pharmacist and insurance man; Harriet, who married James Stewart, attorney and assemblyman, and lived at 1 Ford Avenue; Julia, wife of Harlow E. Bundy, founder of the Bundy Time Recorder Co., the keystone in the IBM arch; and Ada, the wife of A. Ward Ford, another IBM founder. Mrs. Carol Stewart Smith, who now lives on Southside, is a daughter of the Stewarts.

Annette, the third child, became the wife of Timothy Watkins, pioneer farmer who opened Watkins Avenue through his land. He was the son of Hezekiah Watkins, who operated stagecoach lines out of Oneonta for years.

Sylvester, the third son, was a merchant until his father's death in 1873, when he became an executor of the estate and the manager of the family's extensive real estate holdings. His home was at 29 Walnut Street. He had one son, Dr. Walter B. Ford, long a professor at the University of Michigan and recognized as one of the foremost mathematicians in the country.

Clinton E. Ford, born in 1842, enlisted in the 44th New York, the "Ellsworth Avengers", while a student at Madison University (now Colgate) and saw much Civil War action. He conducted a jewelry store for years and was noted as an amateur astronomer. His home was on Main Street, just east of the Bookhout Funeral Home. Clinton, who had no children, died in 1935.

Eliakim R., Jr., the youngest child, lived on Ford Avenue where the Samson store is now. He was a druggist and was prominent in Republican politics, being a clerk in the State Senate and Otsego County party chairman.

Another prominent Ford family was that of Newton I. Ford and his sons, Merton and Arthur. They were distant cousins of Eliakim. Local descendants of this branch are Mrs. Albert S. Nader, Mrs. Herbert B. Plantz and LeRoy S. House, Jr.

## COLLIERS DAM

Having in mind the horrors of the Johnstown flood, the people of Binghamton were thunderstruck when it was announced in 1906 that a dam would be built across the Susquehanna River near Colliers. Today Southern Tier residents are crying for dams to hold back the waters of streams tributary to the river and it seems ironical that a half century ago they were passing resolutions and circulating petitions in a vain effort to stop the building of the Colliers Dam.

When we think today of the dam, we are inclined to consider only Goodyear Lake and the residential and recreational areas which it made possible. There was a day, however, when the electricity generated there ran the interurban railroad and furnished light and power for a considerable area.

During the early days of the electric line connecting the Susquehanna and Mohawk valleys, power came from a steam plant at Hartwick. It soon became apparent that additional facilities must be provided if light and power were supplied to villages along the right of way. In 1906 about 600 acres of fertile alluvial flats along the river above Colliers were acquired, either by purchase or by the securing of flowage rights, and work on the dam was started.

The ideal site had been utilized many years before when in 1823 Jared Goodyear built a dam across the stream at almost the same location as the present installation. He used the water power to run a gristmill and a sawmill which were famous in the area for many years.

In 1904 Herbert T. Jennings, the promotor who built the trolley road, bought the mills and the dam site from Mrs. Ella Lyman, Goodyear's heir, for \$6,000 and two years later sold it to the trolley company for \$12,000.

The dam was started early in 1906. The contractor was the Stevens Hewitt Engineering Company of New York and the cost was about \$200,000. The workmen were housed in barracks nearby while the engineers and other white collar personnel stayed at the Colliers Hotel, a flourishing place at the time.

Water flowed over the dam for the first time on October 22, 1907, just six days and two hours from the time the gates were closed. The power plant went into operation a few weeks later.

The plant was fifteen miles distant from the trolley, which made it necessary to build a power line to carry the 13,200 volt current. In 1908 the Susquehanna River Power Company, an affiliate of the Otsego and Mohawk Railroad, was organized to take over the operation of the hydro-electric plant.

Summer cottages soon began to spring up around the shores of the lake which had been created. George Timewell was the first to build, his camp on the west side going up before the dam was finished. Other early owners of Goodyear Lake frontage were Charles Gardner, J. Gould Hoyt, C. C. Miller and F. M. H. Jackson. For some years trains on the Cooperstown branch of the D.&H. stopped at the lake.

The New York State Electric and Gas Corporation now owns the dam and plant, which it uses, when the water is high, as a supplementary source of electricity. It owns 275 acres of the lake and its surroundings and has flowage rights to 575 additional acres.

## THEY PAID OFF

It really wasn't much of a parade. There was no music and less than a dozen persons participated but at least two thousand people lined Main Street to watch the slim procession.

First came Harry Lambros pushing Townsend Hardware's most comfortable wheelbarrow with S. E. McKean the grinning passenger. Following was Lee VanWoert's automobile with W. A. VanAuken riding the bumper and waving a straw hat at the jeering multitude.

The next exhibit was a worse for wear Hupmobile with Howard Tucker behind the wheel. His passenger was Howard Stafford, nattily attired in brown derby and checkered coat. Far in the rear trudged Frank Walsh, daintily pushing a small peanut along the pavement with a crowbar. That's all there was, there wasn't any more, but the applause was deafening.

The time was November of 1928 and several Oneontans who had thought that Alfred E. Smith would win the presidency over Herbert Hoover were paying their bizarre bets. The great event had been well advertised, hence the hundreds who witnessed the simple occurrence.

But other matters were afoot in the Oneonta of nearly forty years ago. The Common Council, with Mayor Bertus C. Lauren presiding, raised salaries in the Police Department. Henceforth the chief would receive \$2,040 a year, sergeants \$1,800 and patrolmen from \$1,620 to \$1,740.

A city plumbing code was adopted, effective December 1. Appointed to the examining board were Dr. George W. Augustin, City Engineer Frank M. Gurney, Grant Zeh, E. J. House and L. H. Townsend. Plans were made to put a concrete bottom in the public swimming pool in Wilber Park.

A near fatal airplane crash occurred at D. F. Keyes' new airport near the Country Club. The ailerons on the wings of the Fairchild cabin plane owned by Daniel Franklin had been damaged in a severe windstorm and the pilot, Carlton J. Hinman, after making temporary repairs, had started for the factory on Long Island. His mechanic and the latter's wife, Mr. and Mrs. John Willyhard, were accompanying him.

When the plane was airborne, Hinman discovered that he had no longitudinal control and he made a forced landing in a potato patch at the end of the runway. He suffered a dislocated hip, some broken fingers and other minor injuries. The mechanic broke a hip and his wife an arm. The plane was one of the first owned in Oneonta and this was the first crash hereabouts.

Plans had been announced for the elimination of the dangerous Pony Farm crossing on Route 7 but opposition was developing on the ground that the new road would take over \$100,000 off the town assessment roll. There was a pet parade on Main Street with prizes won by dogs led by LeRoy Turner, Jack LaBarge, Joseph Scanlon and Alton Snyder.

The deer season closed with only two bucks shot in the whole county, one near Roseboom and the other in the town of Burlington. Harry D. Wheeler set a local golf record by taking only ten putts on the nine hole Country Club course. His score was 42.



## PHINNEY THE PRINTER

Area farmers swore by the weather predictions in "Phinney's Calendar, or Western Almanac" but when, through a typographical error, snow was forecast for the Fourth of July, there were raised eyebrows. But, lo and behold, snow did fall on the nation's birthday and henceforth "Phinney's" was an almost sacred work.

But publishing the almanac was not the sole claim to fame of Elihu Phinney, one of the most remarkable men who ever lived in Cooperstown. He published the second paper in New York state west of Albany, conducted a big printing business and ran a bookstore which was a pioneer in the art of merchandising.

In 1795 Judge William Cooper persuaded Phinney, a master printer, to come from Connecticut and start the "Otsego Herald, or Western Advertiser". He brought his presses and type to Cooperstown that winter, breaking a way through the snowy wilderness with six teams of horses.

After the overthrow of the John Adams administration, Judge Phinney (he became an associate county judge in 1796) changed the political policy of his paper and became a supporter of Thomas Jefferson. This angered his patron, Judge Cooper, who remained a Federalist, and the latter brought Colonel John Prentiss from New York to start a rival journal.

Thus came into being "The Impartial Observer", which soon changed its name to "The Cooperstown Federalist" and in 1828 became the "Freeman's Journal" under which name it is still published.

Elihu Phinney started a publishing business which turned out thousands of volumes annually on its five hand operated presses. As early as 1820 the plant's stereotype foundry cast a set of plates for a quarto family Bible, one of the first ever made in this country and of which 20,000 copies were printed.

Later Phinney published J. Fenimore Cooper's "Naval History", Colonel Stone's "Life of Brant" and several volumes by Rev. Jacob and John S. C. Abbott, which were household favorites for years, as well as many textbooks. At the time of its greatest output the plant was turning out each year 8,000 large Bibles, 60,000 school texts and 200,000 almanacs and story books.

Phinney established a bookstore in Cooperstown which became famous for its original business methods. Large wagons were constructed as movable bookstores, being equipped with counters and shelves holding large stocks of books. Agents drove these wagons to villages where literature was hard to get.

A canal boat was fitted up as a floating bookstore. This traveled from town to town along the waterway and in winter was anchored at one of the larger towns. Big bookstores were stocked and maintained in cities as far away as Utica, Buffalo and Detroit.

The plant burned one night in 1849, the fire being set by some workmen who had been laid off when power presses were introduced. The publishing department was then moved to Buffalo but the bookstore remained in Cooperstown for many years.

Elihu Phinney was a favorite in Cooperstown because of his social graces and his remarkable gift of wit and satire.

## *RIDING THE RIVER*

As he trudged along the rough paths bordering the river, the teen age boy bitterly regretted the day some weeks before when he had persuaded his father to let him ride the big raft down the Susquehanna from Oneonta to Harrisburg, Pa. The trip down had been fun but the walk back was a rough experience for even a frontier lad inured to hardship.

From soon after the Revolution, when settlers began pouring into the valley, until about 1825, rafting down the river to the Pennsylvania capital or to Baltimore was a considerable industry. White pine was the first species to be rafted but as the hills became denuded of this valuable wood, hemlock took its place in the large rafts which left the hamlet at the rate of two or three a day during the high water seasons.

The land was heavily forested when the first white men came into the region to settle upon the acres which they had purchased from agents of the patent holders. The first job was to clear the land and then to dispose of the timber which was not needed for building or fuel purposes. Before sawmills were set up, millions of feet of good timber were burned for want of a better way to get rid of it.

Ira and Asa Emmons, who came into the valley in the early 1800s, and the latter's son, Carlton, did extensive rafting in pioneer days. Andrew Parish was another large operator in this field. The building trades, ship construction and the hearths of the folk along the coast contributed greatly to the cash income of those frontier settlers who were fortunate enough to be so situated that they could get their surplus lumber to the river.

There were four kinds of rafts commonly in use. One was the "spar raft", which was made up of the longest, straightest white pine logs obtainable. These were used as masts and spars and brought top prices. The Silver Creek valley around what is now West Street furnished the best timber of this kind for many miles around.

A second kind was called a "timber raft" and was made of squared logs for the building trades. Then there were the "lumber rafts", composed of boards which had been cut at a local sawmill. Lastly was the craft known as an "ark". This was a roughly constructed barge twenty-five or thirty feet long and about twelve feet wide. It was filled with logs to give it buoyancy and over them was laid a deck on which there was generally a small cabin for the crew. The ark was used to transport grain and dairy products to the towns downstream.

The rafts were steered by long oars at either end. The crews varied in size from a few men to as many as thirty on the big affairs. The "captain" was a combination of gang boss, purser and pilot. It was his job to get the raft through the dangerous rapids and sharp turns and to sell the timber at the end of the journey. The men were then paid off and left to find their way home as best they could, most often by walking the several hundred miles.

Sometimes the crew members slept on the rafts in improvised cabins but often they spent the nights in one of the many taverns which catered to the river trade.

## WALTON'S START

The five men who, with their families, pitched camp on the present site of Walton one May night in 1785 were all veterans of Washington's armies and had been men of consequence in New York and Long Island. Now they were simply first settlers in a wilderness area.

Joshua Pine was a business man who had turned over his North River ships and his fortune to the Continental cause. Dr. Platte Townsend, Yale and Edinburgh graduate, had given freely of his money and his medical talent during the war. Before the Revolution William Furman had owned vast areage on Long Island while Gabriel and Robert North had been influential citizens of New York and soldiers of distinction.

Also prominent in New York business circles was William Walton, most of whose shipping fortune had been poured into Washington's war coffers. Impoverished by the conflict, he needed money badly although he owned a vast area in the upstate wilderness which had been granted him by the English king.

Pine and Townsend, finding post war conditions intolerable, purchased a portion of the Walton grant and persuaded Furman and the Norths to help them settle the region. In March of 1784 the men and their families sailed up the Hudson on a small sloop. Arriving at Esopus Landing, they secured teams and wagons and started for their new home.

What was marked on the map as a road turned out to be only a rough wilderness trail and they had to cut their way through the forests. They took a route through Pine Hill to what is now Margaretville and then followed the valley of the East Branch of the Delaware to the present site of Downsville whence they swung over the mountain to where is now Walton.

For the first fifteen years of its existence the Walton settlement was a self sufficient hamlet with few new residents. Then came the "great migration" from New England which was to populate so many communities in Otsego and Delaware counties.

In the 1790s the first log rafts were sent down the Delaware from Walton, beginning the lumber and logging industry which laid the foundations for many Delaware County fortunes. About 1830 William B. Ogden entered the business on a large scale, supplying logs for use as masts and spars on sailing vessels. The "Constitution" and many other famous ships flew Old Glory from masts taken from the Walton hills.

In 1820 the Binghamton-Catskill Turnpike was built, passing through Walton, and about 1850 a corduroy road, the Appian way of its time, was constructed from Hancock to Walton. The village began to grow and thrive.

Bibles and volumes of the classics were in the saddlebags of the first settlers and in 1791 they erected a combination church and schoolhouse on Mount Pleasant overlooking the village. From that beginning has come a community which has always been essentially religious, with active churches of several denominations. The educational system has developed until today Walton boasts of one of the finest school plants in the state.

The Walton of today is a busy yet pleasant community peopled with men and women who possess the vigor, grace and humanity of their pioneer ancestors.



## TROLLEY TALES

Drop the word "trolley" in any gathering of old timers and out come the stories, some humorous and some tragic, but all reminiscent of the long gone days when electric roads played a big part in the field of public transportation.

The Southern New York (to give it the name it last had) furnished transportation about the city and connected the Susquehanna and Mohawk valleys. The business done by this small railroad with less than seventy miles of track was amazing. At one time the company operated fourteen passenger round trips from Oneonta to Mohawk daily and eighteen from the junction at Index to Cooperstown. Including the freight trips and milk runs, a total of one hundred and nine trains operated daily over the line in addition to the cars running over the streets of Oneonta.

Let's do a little random reminiscing. In an earlier story we told how the first trial run early in August of 1898 knocked out of commission most of the telephones in Oneonta and resulted in an injunction against the operation of the line. Repairs to the generating machinery were undertaken and when he heard that the difficulty had been remedied, Judge Lyon vacated the injunction.

When the news reached Oneonta the whistle at the power house on Market Street at the foot of Chestnut was blown to indicate that operations would start immediately. The throttle of the Phoenix engine was opened by Thomas Willoughby and the dynamo started spinning. Joseph Tripp threw a switch and current surged through the eight miles of overhead trolley wire in the village.

Car 4, gaily decorated with bunting in the national colors, started on the first run with Superintendent Harry Bronkback at the controls. It went to East End and back and then proceeded to the end of the line at West Oneonta, stopping at the top of Bull Hill to pick up Stephen Bull. At that time the line went down Chestnut, over Oneida and down the present Country Club Road. According to the Oneonta Herald: "The trip from West Oneonta was made in 13 $\frac{3}{4}$  minutes, and hair raising bursts of speed were recorded on some level stretches."

Smoking was forbidden on the cars and this prohibition cost one man his life. One night the superintendent of the moment, Joseph Nuby, was riding in from West Oneonta. A tough local character insisted on smoking in the car and made a pass at Nuby when the latter told him to stop. Nuby went to the front of the car, took the heavy brass control handle from the motorman and walked back up the aisle. When the offender attacked Nuby again the superintendent brought the handle down on the passenger's head, causing injuries from which he died three days later. After reviewing the evidence carefully, a coroner's jury brought in a verdict of death from pneumonia.

The car that ran from Chestnut Street along Church to Center and then to Maple and the Normal School was sometimes called "the old maids' bus" since many teachers in those days were spinsters. Small boys used to give the conductors a lot of trouble on this extension. They would catch rides on the car bumpers and pull the trolley pole off the wire, thus stopping the car. Wet leaves would be placed on the tracks on the Maple Street hill with obvious results.

## FIRST DEMOCRACY

This is Indian country. All about is evidence that the red man had a civilization here thousands of years before the whites set foot in this valley. In recognition of this fact the official seal of the City of Oneonta has as its motif the head of an Indian but, unfortunately, headdressed as no redskin who lived hereabouts ever was.

Most people derive their knowledge of the Indian from his depiction on the TV tube and on the movie screen and it is nearly always the Plains Indian who is shown there. We cannot understand the New York state Indian if we judge him only by what we know of his counterparts on the prairies and in the mountains of the west.

Various Algonquin tribes occupied this region for from three to four thousand years and they were followed by the Iroquois, who, in their best days, were the noblest and most interesting of all the Indians who have lived on this continent north of Mexico.

They effected a union of states, founded political institutions and gave birth to self government in America when they organized the Iroquois League. Much has been written about the statesmanship which directed the formation of this federation. Its avowed purpose was to abolish war and it has been called one of the most far sighted and, in its aims, one of the most beneficent schemes ever devised for mankind.

The Iroquois carried their arms west to the Mississippi and south to the Carolinas. At the height of their power they held sway over a territory larger than the Roman Empire. Until the white man came among them with his firearms and his firewater, the League, because it had the power to enforce its decrees, compelled peace within the far flung borders of its domain.

It is not known just when the Iroquois came into Central New York from the St. Lawrence valley, which had been their abode for centuries, but the League was in existence at least a hundred years before the Dutch landed in 1612. Probably the migration started around 1500.

Five nations originally composed the Iroquois League—the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas and Senecas. Early in the eighteenth century the Tuscororas, who had long lived in North Carolina, were permitted to settle in New York and to join the League, which then became the Six Nations.

The federation had its headquarters in a small village near Onondaga Lake. From this central location the chiefs sent their couriers east, west and south to summon delegates from the various tribes to congresses, where matters of general interest were discussed and League policies were determined. These were binding on the Six Nations.

Powerful though they were, the Iroquois were never a numerous people. At the time of their greatest influence, before they began to suffer from the vices of the white man, they were around twenty-five thousand in number.

The Iroquois of the upper Susquehanna were mainly Mohawks and Oneidas, with later a few Onondagas and Tuscaroras. They lived in small villages, with fields of maize and beans, and apple orchards nearby.

## HUNTINGTON'S WILL

Collis P. Huntington never lost his love for Oneonta but he did get irked at village officials a couple of times. Perhaps that is why the community was not mentioned in his will, although he left millions to residents and natives of what he always regarded as his home town.

In the 1880s he offered to give a large tract of land on Academy Street as a school playground and park with the condition that the title would revert to him if the place ever ceased to be used for public purposes. The school board turned down the offer, much to Huntington's annoyance.

In 1888 the extension of Chestnut Street from Main to Market required the condemnation of a small lot on Main Street which he owned. In this case the railroad builder was dissatisfied with the small award which was made.

Despite these irritations, he was fond of Oneonta and of its people. He owned much property here and it was the home of his brother, sisters, nieces and nephews. Through the years he kept in contact with many of the friends of his period of residence in the village, among them William McCrum, Harvey Baker, David Yager and Dr. Meigs Case.

His private cars were called the Oneonta I and Oneonta II and his palatial steam launch on Raquette Lake in the Adirondacks also bore the name of the village from which he started his career. He was a subscriber to the Oneonta Herald to the day of his death and he once said that it was the only paper coming to his office which he ordered laid aside for his personal perusal.

His private benefactions were numerous and were always unostentatious. The appeal of no old Oneonta friend was ever made in vain.

C. P. Huntington was indeed a "robber baron", shrewd and ruthless in his business dealings, but there were surprising facets to his character. He was much interested in the education of the Negro. He was one of the founders of Hampton Institute in Virginia and was a heavy contributor to Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute.

Huntington was a bookworm and had a fine library in his Fifth Avenue mansion. Ancient history was his hobby and he was an authority on things Greek and Roman. Plutarch was his favorite author and he boasted that he had read the "Lives" twenty times in that many years.

He died in his camp on Raquette Lake on August 5, 1900, and his will, disposing of a vast estate, was offered for probate a few days later. Some idea of the size of his holdings can be had when it is realized that he controlled railroads which spanned the continent and steamship lines whose ships sailed the Seven Seas, as well as dozens of mines and manufacturing and mercantile concerns.

The will left half of the residual estate to his widow and half to his nephew, Henry E. Huntington, a native Oneontan. Among the specific bequests were handsome legacies to Mrs. Solon Huntington of Oneonta, his sister-in-law; to his sisters, Mrs. Susan Porter and Mrs. Elizabeth Purdy of Oneonta and Mrs. Ellen Gates; and to several nieces and nephews, among them Mrs. Mary Pardee Lewis, Edward H. Pardee and Mrs. Elnora Loveland of Oneonta, and Willard V. Huntington and Mrs. Caroline Holladay of San Francisco, both native Oneontans.



## THE LAST HANGING

It just seemed as though Cooperstown could not have a public hanging without something happening to mar the pleasure of the occasion.

First there was that Arnold affair in 1805 when the sheriff spoiled the fun by producing a reprieve at the last moment. That was when the old lady rocked her chair right off the platform, breaking her neck in the process.

And then there was the grisly proceeding in 1827. The culprit got his neck stretched according to plan, but only after a grandstand had collapsed, killing two people and injuring many. Right then and there the authorities decided that enough was enough and ended the practice of public hangings.

On August 24, 1827, there was a hanging in Albany. In the audience of 30,000 people was Levi Kelley of Cooperstown, who was so impressed by the scene that he remarked to a friend that no one who had witnessed such a spectacle could ever commit murder.

Living in the same house as Kelley was Abraham Spafford and his family. Ten days after the Albany hanging, the two men had an argument about Kelley's treatment of a lame boy who worked about the place. Incensed by his friend's interference, Kelley got his rifle and shot Spafford through the heart.

The two day trial was presided over by Judge Samuel Nelson, later to become an associate justice of the United States Supreme Court. Kelley was found guilty and was sentenced to die on December 28.

The gallows was erected at a spot about 400 feet south of the present High School. During the morning rain fell in torrents but by noon more than 4,000 people were clustered at the scene. The hanging of a murderer was then regarded as a spectacle of great moral and educational value.

Near the gibbet a stand 100 feet long and twelve deep had been erected. This was crowded with 600 persons, who had paid twenty-five cents each for the good view which the elevated platform provided. Under the stand liquor and beer were sold.

The procession from the jail was a thing of pomp and circumstance. A troop of cavalry, a corps of artillery and four companies of infantry guarded the prisoner. This unfortunate man, apparently in poor health, lay upon a bed on a sleigh drawn by his own favorite pair of black horses.

The cortege had reached the gallows and the solemn services were about to begin when the hastily built grandstand collapsed with a tremendous crash, plunging the occupants into a writhing heap amid the broken timbers. As cries and groans arose from the struggling mass of humanity, friends and relatives rushed toward the scene, creating a near riot.

The troops soon had order restored and began the work of rescue. It was found that one man had been killed instantly and another soon died. More than a score were seriously hurt.

After the dead and wounded had been removed, the condemned man was taken from the sleigh to the gallows and hanged in due and ancient form. The show was over and the crowd soon dispersed.

This gruesome exhibition brought to a head a growing sentiment against public hangings and ended the practice in Otsego County for all time.

## EARLY FREEMASONRY

As the stranger swung down from his horse and approached the door of Simeon Walling's log tavern, a man stepped from the shadows and addressed him: "Sorry, sir, the Masonic lodge meets here tonight and no guests will be accepted until midnight. You'll have to go to the McDonald tavern down the road a piece."

Such an incident could easily have occurred, for the famous Walling tavern, which stood where the United Presbyterian Church is now, was, according to the best evidence, the meeting place of the first Masonic lodge in the community.

When the lodge was chartered in 1814, McDonald's Mills, as the tiny hamlet was then known, had about a dozen houses and perhaps sixty inhabitants. It would seem that a settlement so small could not support a fraternal order but Masonic lodges were then being organized in places even smaller, such as Harpersfield, Kortright and West Meredith. There were already seven lodges in Otsego County and five in Delaware.

In the early days of the Republic, Freemasonry spread rapidly. Aware of the prominent part which the order had played in the fight for freedom, men were anxious to join the fraternity whose membership embraced most of those prominent in the Revolution, including such men as Washington and Franklin, Paul Revere, John Paul Jones and Lafayette, Kosciusko, Kossuth, Pulaski and Steuben.

A petition to Grand Lodge, dated September 2, 1814, for a lodge here was signed by Gloud Wands, Caleb Crandall, Joseph Westcott, Jr., Storm A. Becker, Henry Larue, John Banner, John Quackenboys, John Fritts, David Brewer, Peter Sible, Jacob Young, John S. Smith, Parker Wilson and John Benet.

On December 19, 1814, a charter signed by Grand Master DeWitt Clinton was issued for Milford Lodge No. 258. The charter called for a lodge "to be located in the south part of the town of Milford," most of the territory now included in the City of Oneonta being then in Milford township.

The minutes of this lodge have never been found but in records of Grand Lodge the names of forty brethren appear. The first master was Philo Andrews and the wardens were Gloud Wands and Caleb Crandall. In those days, especially in small towns, lodge meetings were generally held in taverns since only there could a large enough room be found. Simeon Walling was a member of Lodge 238 and it is quite certain that the group met in his establishment.

The lodge continued its activities until 1832 when its charter was revoked for failure to make reports to Grand Lodge. It is not known what happened to the lodge records but the ancient charter was found nearly a hundred years after in the attic of a descendant of one of the members and is now a cherished possession of Oneonta Lodge.

In 1858 there was agitation for a revival of Masonry in Oneonta and a petition was made to Grand Lodge. A dispensation was granted and the first meeting was held on January 8, 1859, in a room over Perkins' marble shop, which stood where the Citizens Bank now is. The charter was dated June 20, 1859. Elias Light was the first master.

This lodge, Oneonta No. 466, is still going strong, one hundred and fifty years after the first appearance of Freemasonry in our community.

## *SPRING OF 1920*

It had been a very rough winter with much more than the usual amount of snow. Many a trolley on the Southern New York Railway had to be dug out of the huge drifts between Richfield Springs and Mohawk and as late as April 1 high snowbanks still lined the right of way. It had cost the line some \$30,000 to keep its tracks clear that winter of 1920 and that was a lot of money for a road that was always hard pressed financially.

The highways were closed between Oneonta and New York most of the winter. When Jack Sitts made the first trip through on March 31 it took him over nine hours, even with Bob Hume's fast and powerful Buick.

Mayor Andrew Ceperley had ambitious plans for Oneonta's streets that April. He intended to macadamize Elm, Maple and Spruce but a lot of repair work had to be done first. And then there was another difficulty. Where was the city going to get the oil to treat its many dirt thoroughfares? City Engineer Frank Gurney could not find an oil company anywhere that would submit a bid, let alone accept an order. The war had drained the country's reserves and crude oil was in short supply.

The mayor was holding office hours in the Municipal Building each morning from 11 to 12 and one of the things which citizens would surely ask about was the proposal to widen Main Street. That scheme involved a lot of problems.

A fire which could have been disastrous caused a \$10,000 loss in the quarters of the Oneonta Sales Company in the Pardee block on Broad Street (next below the Bern store). Four new Fords, all of them sold, were destroyed as were hundreds of tires and a large quantity of spare parts.

The Oneonta Wanderers had just closed a successful basketball season by beating the Binghamton Interstate League team, 40 to 32. The Wanderers' starting five, Keg Gregory, Jim Perry, Dewey Thomas, Stubby Parks and Jim Tamsett, played the entire game without relief.

The cost of living, for men at least, was going up. Barbers had announced that the price of haircuts would be raised from forty to fifty cents. A shave with hot towel would cost a quarter while facial massages and plain shampoos had gone from thirty to thirty-five cents.

It was announced that unofficial figures for the 1920 census showed the city to have a population of 11,582, a gain of 2,091, or 22% over the 1910 figures. The West End was developing rapidly and the increase there should raise the total to over 12,000.

City Judge Frank Huntington had fined a motorist \$50 for speeding. That was a fine of unheard of size but the traffic problem was becoming acute and "scorchers" had to be taught a lesson.

Ceperley and Morgan had just bought the Ford-Stewart block at the southwest corner of Main and Broad Streets. The land there had been owned by the Ford family since 1838.

It was a good year. The world was rid of war forever and there was a feeling of optimism in the air.



## PHYSICIAN OF PARTS

When a man of medicine becomes interested in politics, his concern is generally sincere and thorough, as witness the cases of Dr. Alexander F. Carson and Dr. Francis H. Marx, both of whom became mayors of the city of Oneonta. Another case in point is that of Dr. Julian C. Smith, who served two terms as member of the State Assembly from Otsego County.

Julian Cowley Smith was born in the town of Davenport, Delaware County, in 1865 and was the son of Michael and Melissa (Cowley) Smith. He received his early education in a district school near his home and at Oneonta High School, graduating from the latter in 1886.

He received his medical degree from the University of the City of New York in 1891 and served his internship at Bellevue Hospital. In 1892 he came to Oneonta, where he practiced his profession for forty-five years.

Dr. Smith was on the surgical staff of Fox Memorial Hospital when it opened its doors on June 26, 1901, and was closely identified with the institution throughout his career. He was also a director of the Otsego County Tuberculosis Sanatorium at Mt. Vision.

He was the kind of doctor who not only gave his patients the benefit of his skill and experience but also much of himself. His happy countenance and cheerful conversation in the sickroom just naturally made you feel better.

Dr. Smith served the old Third Separate Company as its surgeon and when the outfit left for the Spanish-American War he became medical officer of the depot unit, the 103rd Infantry company.

When this country entered World War I he offered his services and served throughout the conflict as a captain in the Medical Corps. Upon his release from duty he helped organize Oneonta Post of the American Legion and became a charter member.

Keenly interested in every phase of community life, Dr. Smith gave much time to many organizations and activities. He was a director of the Citizens National Bank and an active member of the Senate and Fortnightly Clubs and the Oneonta Club and Oneonta Country Club, as well as the Masonic Lodge and Chapter. An early member of Oneonta Lodge of Elks, he served that group as Exalted Ruler.

Dr. Smith soon became interested in Republican politics. He was an alderman at one time and was always greatly concerned with municipal government. Many of the talks which he gave to various organizations were in connection with some phase of civic improvement.

He served the Republican County Committee as chairman for some time and in 1920 was elected assemblyman from Otsego County, serving two terms. A predilection for politics seemed to run in the family. Dr. Smith's brother-in-law, Frank G. Sherman, also served as Republican county chairman and as an assemblyman before becoming postmaster, and his son, Harold S. Smith, was a supervisor, chairman of the city committee and a state official.

Dr. Smith was married to Alvira Sherman of Davenport in 1894. During his later years he and Mrs. Smith spent their winters in Florida and he died in Lakelands in March of 1937.

The family home was for many years at 21 Ford Avenue.

## OLD LIVERY STABLES

"Horse and buggy days" is now a term of derision but that period of time before the advent of the motor car was a pretty good age in which to grow up. The tempo of living was like the gait of the horse, fast when need be but generally slow and satisfying.

The automobile is so much a part of our lives today that it is hard to believe that little more than a half century ago it was a rarity in the town. The first car arrived on the scene about the turn of the century but it was not until around 1910 that Dobbin, long the king of short haul transportation, abdicated to the horseless carriage.

In the olden days the livery stable was a necessary part of the way of life. It was the "U Drive It" company and the taxi stand; it was the parking lot when you drove into town to shop and the storage garage for horse owners who had no barn; it furnished rigs for weddings and funerals and teams for the fire trucks of the volunteer companies. It was indispensable to the age.

We have vivid memories of several livery stables. Perhaps the biggest was that of Arthur and Merton Coy on Dietz Street where the A&P now is. This was razed in 1914 to make way (ironically) for Dibble's garage.

Another good sized stable was on Broad Street on the site of the Enders store. This burned in 1905 with the loss of eighteen horses. The owner, Seymour Camp, then started a stable behind his home on Grand Street.

Still another old time livery stable was that of Fred Wilcox on Elm Street back of the present Video building. Dr. C. R. Brand had a hitching stable on Market Street in connection with his veterinary activities and there was another on Dietz Street on land now occupied by Huntington Park.

Stables in back of the various hotels housed the buses which met the railway trains and also served the patrons of the hostleries. Private barns were scattered all over town, a condition which would be considered intolerable today.

When the farmer drove into town to do the week's shopping he parked his horse and buggy in a livery or hitching stable, where the steed would be fed and watered during the owner's absence. If you wanted to take your best girl out for a spin in the country and the family nag was unavailable, you could rent a horse and "courting buggy". If you took the family out for a Sunday drive to the Vlei or to Strader's Lake, a surrey or carryall would be the vehicle.

The livery cabs or hacks were the taxis of the period. They were four wheeled, two horse (generally) enclosed rigs with the seats inside facing each other. The driver sat out in the weather. On the rear was a rack for baggage, and small boys.

The vicinity of a livery stable was not a choice residential spot. The stables had an atmosphere redolent of damp straw, ammonia and manure. There are some, however, who will contend that these odors are preferable to the oily, gassy smells of the motor age. The stables were also noisy, ratty and attracted flies like honey draws bees. However, there was an indefinable something about it that makes the livery stable seem almost glamorous in retrospect.

## THE CIRCUS COMES IN

The young lad and the friend who was spending the night with him went to bed early that summer's evening in 1912 (or was it 1913?). When the alarm rang at 5 a.m. they dressed hurriedly, tiptoed out of the house and hurried to the foot of Broad Street.

The boys had to wait an extra hour in the pre-dawn chill because the kid brother had set the alarm clock an hour ahead while they were asleep but it was worth it, for Ringling Brothers Circus was coming to Oneonta and they didn't want to miss a single feature of the visit.

Finally the first section of the long train rolled in and the unloading began. Within minutes the wagons containing the cook and dining tents were rumbling down Market Street on their way to Wilcox Flats, to be soon followed by the huge conveyances, drawn by six or eight horses, which carried the tent poles and the canvas.

After awhile the boys hiked to the circus grounds to watch the big tent go up. Then it was uptown again for the big parade and then back to the lot for the afternoon performance. Home for supper and then back with the family for the evening show.

Modern living has its advantages but some precious things have been lost from the old days and one is the big circus, which delighted the hearts of generations of young and old. Indoor circuses can still be seen and there are a few small outdoor shows but in most respects these are but pallid reminders of the former spectacles, which had much more to offer than just what took place under the big top.

Circuses came to Oneonta in the earliest days of the hamlet. A couple of acrobats and a mangy animal or two would hit the town and set up shop almost anywhere. As the years went by the shows grew larger. The area around the corner of Dietz and Wall Streets was the circus ground for many years.

The land in the vicinity of Cherry Street was the locale of the shows in later years. Here Barnum's Circus showed, with the great Phineas Barnum present and selling programs. For many years, starting before our time, Wilcox Flats was the place where the big shows were held.

Here have appeared all of the famous circuses — Sells, Floto; Forepaugh; Barnum and Bailey; and Ringling Brothers, as well as the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show and its competitor, Pawnee Bill.

In the early days the shows traveled by horse and wagon and later by railroad. Although the show came in by rail the horse was still an important factor during our youth. Horses drew the heavy wagons to and from the grounds and, gaily caparisoned, pulled the parade vehicles. When the streets were deep with mud or the ground on the flats was spongy from rains or flooding, the elephants were pressed into use to move the big wagons.

O yes, we nearly forgot to mention the calliope. How well we remember that marvelous steam music maker that used to bring up the rear of the parade. No sound is quite comparable, which is probably all to the good.



## IT WAS IN 1913

William Sulzer had been governor less than three months but already he was in trouble. Seeking a way to increase state revenues, he had proposed that the registration fee for automobiles be increased. That was bad enough but he also suggested that drivers and owners be licensed and that the latter be required to carry insurance. How idiotic could they get in Albany?

Even his own Democratic party rose up in wrath against this arrant nonsense and the assemblyman from Otsego County, Laverne P. Butts, said that he would never vote for such oppressive legislation.

But that wasn't the only gripe of Oneontans. Although the winter had been mild, some streets were in terrible shape. Furthermore, the city tax levy was for nearly \$106,000, an increase of \$30,000 over the preceding year. Where was all that money coming from?

That was in March of 1913. As time marches on, its unfolding drama is played by different characters but the plot remains much the same. Go back through newspaper files for a hundred years and much of what you read will seem strangely familiar.

What else was happening in Oneonta in that last of the Golden Years, before War climbed into the driver's seat? The streets were in bad shape but Mayor Frank Blodgett and the Board of Public Works were moving. Contracts had been let to pave River Street from Main to Gilbert with concrete at a cost of \$2.03 per front foot, including curb. Over 60,000 square yards of streets were to be oiled at 1.2 cents a yard.

Business was booming on the D.&H. and Vice-President Sims told the Merchants' Association that the Oneonta payroll was about two million dollars a year, which is less than the present State College payroll.

The Normal School announced that its February graduates had all secured teaching jobs at from \$500 to \$700 per year. The OHS Junior class with Irving Ives as president, held its annual dance. Other officers and committee members were Beulah Bell, Riley Crippen, Ernest Bolton, Hazel Palmer, Grace Campbell, Julian Jackson and Lowell Huntington.

The children's dancing class of Miss Stella Parmalee entertained with a Fancy Costume Ball, with Bruce LeSeuer and Mabel Elmore leading the Grand March and Francis Lee and Kathleen VanCleft the Final March. Canning's orchestra furnished the music for the waltzes, two steps, gavottes and minuets.

The Oneonta Department Store was advertising eggs at 25 cents a dozen and bacon at 20 cents a pound. Lyon's Factory Glove Store had kid gloves at one dollar a pair and M. Gurney and Sons was selling ladies' tailored suits at \$7.50. There were no Geritol ads but a paid notice read "Don't be weak, sickly or ailing when Electric Bitters at fifty cents a bottle will benefit you from the first dose."

Earl Fritts made his first flight in his Thomas biplane, taking off from a South-side pasture. He was in the air fifteen minutes and reached an altitude of five hundred feet. It seemed a foolhardy stunt but there were those who thought that someday there might be a use for the Wright brothers' invention. After all, look what was being done with that contraption known as the automobile!

## THE KIRMESS

With the possible exception of the Elks Fair, no public entertainment ever held in Oneonta quite came up to the Kirmess in elegance of staging and execution and in the number of participants. Over one hundred local matrons and twice that number of children and young misses and masters took part in the four day festival held in 1902 to raise funds for the Oneonta Public Library.

In those days the library depended largely upon the general public for its maintenance and growth. The Union School district appropriated \$800 annually to the library but after payment of fixed charges there was very little left for the purchase of books.

In 1902 the library occupied cramped quarters in the Doyle and Smith block in the back portion of what are now the offices of Leamy, VanWoert and Dunn. It had 6,600 books and an annual circulation of about 20,000 volumes. The trustees were Albert Morris, John R. Skinner, Alva Seybolt, Andrew B. Saxton and George W. Fairchild. Miss Ellen Hitchcock was the librarian.

The Kirmess, named after the church fairs of medieval days, consisted of a Cinderella pageant and a large variety of folk dances and other features. It was held in October of 1902 in the old Armory, which occupied the same site as does the present structure.

A stage was erected at one end of the drill hall and booths were built along the sides. Here the wives of the village business and professional men sold light refreshments, candy, flowers, tobacco and fancy articles.

The Cinderella pageant featured the matinees. Mrs. James Stewart was in charge of this event, in which her daughter, Caroline, was Cinderella; Augustus Gurney was Prince Charming; Milton E. Furman, the stepfather; Genevieve Whipple and Margaret Morris, the step-sisters; Mary Mahon, the Fairy God Mother, and Collis H. Washburn, a courtier. Others in the cast were Charlotte Lunn, Margaret Gurney, Marcia Saxton, Leora Colburn, Earl Hoyt, Marie Saxton, Lincoln Kellogg, Harold Bates, Harry Randall and Clayton Holmes.

We were seven at the time and since the Japanese Dance was for kids of that age and for the more potent reason that our mother had charge of this feature, Master Edwin, despite vigorous protest, became a small oriental, complete with flowered kimono, parasol, pigtail and coolie hat. Ye Gods! What hurt most was that time which could have been better devoted to fun and games, had to be spent in endless hours of rehearsal.

The Dance of the Summer Girls, in charge of Mrs. Walter Whipple, was by young ladies and gentlemen. The music for this was "Tell Me Pretty Maiden" from the operetta "Floradora", which had been the hit of Broadway just a short time before.

There was an Indian War and Moon Dance, a Hornpipe and a Hungarian Gypsy Dance, as well as a Scottish Reel and Highland Fling, to mention just a few of the many dances and tableaux. Authentic costumes by the score were made, rented or bought for the occasion.

We have no record of how much money was cleared, but the sum must have been considerable for the hall was packed for three afternoons and four nights.

## AN OLD THANKSGIVING

Much of the work had been done hours before Thanksgiving dawned. Tom, the big gobbler, had lost his head in a moment of stress a couple of days ago and was now hanging in the cold room, already stuffed with sausage dressing spiced with thyme, sweet marjoram and sage.

Pie filling had been prepared and sugar, molasses and caraway cookies and jam tarts made. Cranberries from the small bog down near the creek had been cooked.

The year was 1905 let us say, in an age when Thanksgiving was a very important holiday. Christmas was for the immediate family but Thanksgiving was the time of reunion when the whole clan gathered at Grandpa's for a day of feast and talk but with the real meaning of the holiday by no means forgotten.

Our family arrived at the farm about mid-morning after a train and s Surrey ride. Aunt Grace, Grandma and the hired girl had been in the kitchen for hours. Grandpa was in his chair behind the living room stove, smoking Mountain Rose in his corn-cob and making frequent comments as to how much better things were done in the good old days. Uncle Joe was busy with whatever a man is permitted to do in the cooking area.

Mother put on an apron and went into the kitchen, Dad settled himself for a talk with Grandpa while sister, our three cousins and ourself hovered around the fringe of things, getting thoroughly in the way while we feasted our eyes and nostrils on the tremendous array of victuals.

We visited the pantry to view the goodies there, swiping a few cookies in the process. Next came the buttery off the summer kitchen. Here were the pumpkin pies baked earlier in the morning, the curled edges of golden brown crust encircling smooth areas of yellow custard. From them came the autumn odor of pumpkin, mingled with the fragrance of cinnamon and nutmeg, of ginger and allspice.

Alongside were the apple pies, newly made from luscious Greenings, Baldwins and Northern Spies. And then the mince pies, made some days before, cold stored and now ready to be warmed on the oven top. Through the tracery of the letter "M" came the tantalizing smell of choice beef, boiled cider, cherries, apples, currants, raisins and citron, all blended with the heady bouquet of fine old brandy.

At last came the summons to table and paradise was in the offing. After grace was said, Uncle carved the big bird and put liberal portions on the plates, which were passed down the table. The kids, sitting far below the salt, got theirs last.

Then came the bowls of mashed potatoes and giblet gravy, of dressing and squash and the side dishes of dried corn and boiled onions. There was white, corn and steamed brown bread, all freshly made. Dozens of kinds of pickles, preserves, jellies and jams were yours for the asking.

The village grocer sold very little that went on the farm table. The meats and vegetables, fruits and berries, butter and cheese, even many of the spices, were home produced and no farm wife would think of buying baked goods.



## THE FIRST SCHOOL

The beautiful Senior High School on upper East Street is a far cry from Oneonta's first school, a small log cabin which stood near where Broad Street now meets Main. There is no known record of when it was built but it was in use as early as 1803.

This crude one room school was not the first in the township, however. It was antedated by one on Southside near the Swart Hollow Road and by another on the Plains in the vicinity of Pond Lily.

In 1812 the log school was replaced by a slightly larger frame structure on about the same spot. This was built of hill pine which had been dressed at the McDonald sawmill on lower Main Street. The desks were sections of half logs with the flat side planed smooth and with holes bored in the lower surfaces for the long pegs on which they stood. The seats were similarly constructed but had shorter legs.

The first teacher in the latter building was a Mr. Waldo, who boarded at the home of Dr. Joseph Lindsay, the community's pioneer physician, who lived on the corner of Main and Grove Streets where the gas station is now. Waldo was succeeded by a man named Maxwell.

The latter received for his services seventy-five cents a day, out of which he was expected to pay for board and lodging. Moreover, he agreed to "be at the school-house at six o'clock in the morning and to remain there until after dark", if the pupils would do the same.

It is recorded that Asa Emmons, who lived on Southside on what was later known as the Slade farm, disapproved of this arrangement as he wanted his children home by dark.

Oneonta's boys and girls got their schooling in this building until 1840 when a two story frame school was built on Grove Street nearly opposite the old First Baptist church. Beside it was a playground where the kids played such favorite games as "Bull in the Ring", "Crack the Whip", and "Pullaway".

Across the street were the church horse sheds, on whose upper beams were stored the long red ladders of the village fire department. Directly under those beams were lower ones dividing each shed into stalls. The lower beams and the ladders lying across the upper ones constituted the school gymnasium. A boy's physical prowess was judged by his facility in vaulting the lower beams and swinging along the ladders with his hands, feet dangling.

There were two teachers in this school, one presiding over the room on the first floor while the other conducted classes upstairs. Miss Delilah Sullivan, who taught Oneonta boys and girls for many years, was in charge on the second floor. Among the text books used were Sanders' Readers and Spelling Book, Clark's Grammar, Colton's Geography and Thompson's Arithmetic.

This school fulfilled Oneonta's needs insofar as free education was concerned until 1868 when the Union School was built on Academy Street. Enlarged during the years to three times its original size, this building was used until 1907 when the building which was the Senior High School until recently, was built.

## ALLIGER HILL

The term "Alliger" was probably a corruption of "Alger" since several families of that name lived in the area, but whatever the origin of the phrase, Alliger Hill it was to its denizens and to the people of Oneonta a century and a half ago.

In the days before the Civil War the road which is now North Fifth Street continued on over the top of the hill and into the thinly settled section beyond. Alliger Hill comprised the top of the mountain from this road eastward to the stream now called Baker Brook, which comes down out of the hills just beyond the old Morgan mansion at Emmons.

On Alliger Hill lived a breed of men and women whose manner of living and whose doings have given rise to many tales and legends. Here resided Murphys and Algers, Bakers and Hotalings, nearly all of them descendants of pioneer families.

The houses were mostly of logs with here and there a more pretentious dwelling with boards running up and down over the sides. These were the homes of the more aristocratic families, the "upper ten" of the Hill, so to speak.

The "learnin'" of the older inhabitants was confined to the ability to make an "X" at the bottom of a note and to what slight knowledge of physiology could be had from surveying the disembowled figure which pointed out the signs of the zodiac on the second page of Phinney's Almanac.

They were a hard working people when the spirit moved. They cleared away the forests and planted fields of rye, which yielded their bread. They saw to it that there was a surplus of grain which could be taken to Shepherd's still down on the Plains and there exchanged for what was for them the staff of life.

Timber was plentiful and if one ran short on his own premises, who knew where the boundary lines were anyway? They turned this raw material into axe handles, staves, shingles and wagon spokes, which could be bartered in Oneonta.

There were sheep aplenty grazing the hills and fat hens and gobblers in the lowlands and if an occasional fowl or animal turned up missing, its owner seldom made a fuss since poultry and mutton were cheap.

Luther Baker was a prominent but somewhat different member of the colony. He worked hard, paid his debts and seldom got into trouble even when the wine flowed fast and deep. He liked a good time and wanted his neighbors to share it so he built a double log house with the lower floor one big room.

Here at intervals he would hold a "breakdown". After a few games of cards, the sound of the fiddle would be heard in "Rosin the Bow" or "Rake Her Down, Sal" and the dance would start, to continue, except for frequent intermissions for refueling, until dawn.

On training days and at the time of town meetings, political rallies and other public occasions the men from Alliger Hill would come to town with their goods and their loads of firewood. After they had bartered for groceries and other articles, they would repair to the McDonald or Walling taverns or to the Susquehanna House for an evening of uninhibited fun, being careful to leave for home before the townspeople discovered that the firewood they had purchased was green poplar.

## POSTAL MATTERS

In 1817 when James McDonald opened the hamlet's first postoffice in his tavern at the corner of Main and River Streets, there were fewer people in the community than are now employed by the postal service in Oneonta.

During the nearly a century and a half since then, twenty-one men have held the position of postmaster and have operated in fifteen different locations. Squire McDonald held sway until 1829 when he was succeeded by Eliakim R. Ford, who moved the office to his store on the opposite corner of River.

The next year Jacob Dietz, Jr. took over and moved to his store on the site of Stevens Hardware. He held office but a year when Ford got a second appointment and took the equipment back to his store. During this four year term the name of the village was changed from Milfordville to Oneonta.

D. A. A. Ensworth became postmaster in 1835 and moved uptown to the wooden building still standing at 100 Main. He was followed by Timothy Sabin who operated in a store standing where Chestnut Street extension now meets Main. William Angell was the next appointee and during his short term the office was in his hotel on the northeast corner of Main and Chestnut. William Fritts succeeded him and the office traveled diagonally across Main to a stone building where Molinari's liquor store now is.

The next move was up Chestnut Street to the store of Samuel J. Cook where the Building and Loan Association building now is. Andrew J. Shaw was the next incumbent and he moved the office to his law quarters where the Baker Hardware store is now. Silas Sullivan followed him and the move this time was only next door. He served through the Civil War period.

George W. Reynolds became postmaster in 1869, serving for eight years in three different locations, first in the Blend Block in the Wooden Row, then across the street where Stevens Hardware now is and lastly in the Saunders building at the corner of Main and Broad.

John Cope followed him and moved the stamps back to where Sabin had been forty years before. He was succeeded in 1881 by Carey B. Pepper, who took the equipment to that part of the new Central Hotel block about where the entrance to the Citizens Bank is today.

Postmaster Pepper was followed in the same location by Hartford Nelson and he by Harlow E. Bundy of IBM fame. During his term, on April 1, 1888, the free delivery system was inaugurated, the first carriers being Stephen H. Brown, Charles H. Mahon and James Bristol.

Charles F. Shelland replaced Mr. Bundy in 1889. In 1890 the office was moved to the Exchange Block on Dietz Street directly back of the hotel. George Kirkland took over in 1894, serving until 1898 when Mr. Shelland began his second term. In 1900 the first cancellation machine was installed and in 1902 rural delivery began.

Charles J. Beams became postmaster in 1913, serving until 1922. Under his reign the present government building was put into use in 1915. Frank G. Sherman and Chester A. Miller followed and the present postmaster, Samuel J. Bertuzzi, took office in 1950.



## '12 AND '13

Why the classes of 1912 and 1913 at Oneonta High School had their pictures taken together we don't know, but they did and when we received a copy the other day from Herbert Miller '12, now of Detroit, memories flocked of people whom we once knew well. A few we see frequently, most of them only occasionally and some we shall never greet again.

The locale of the picture is just outside the girls' entrance of the old Oneonta High School, then almost a new building, and the time must have been the winter of 1911-12. There is snow on the ground and most of the boys and girls are attired in the heavy winter clothing of the period. Strangely enough, five girls in the front row are without coats or hats.

What has happened to these eighty odd teen-agers during the past half century? Fortune smiled upon some, for there are future millionaires here. Nearly all of the boys saw service in World War I and Augustus Gurney, a West Pointer, eventually became a general. Almost a quarter of the group went on to college and that was a high percentage for that time.

Romance was rearing its lovely head even while the picture was being taken and there were four marriages between members of the group — Clara Wright and Ernest Rathbun, Genevieve Whipple and Herbert Getman, Alice Kilkenny and Lynn Horton and Cora Wade and Clyde Bresee. Each of these unions has been broken by death: Rathbun, Getman and Horton are deceased, as is Cora Wade.

There is one non-student in the picture, Albert E. Fizzle, then a young teacher of physics and chemistry and coach of basketball and baseball. We know him now as Dr. Fizzle, retired after a distinguished career in the field of education.

Six of the boys, Herbert Getman, Montford Paige, Stanton Pendleton, Daniel Luce, Lynn Horton and Edwin Moore later graduated from Hamilton College. Getman, Horton and Luce are deceased, Paige and Pendleton are retired Bell Telephone executives and Moore is your author.

At one end of the back row is Sherman Fairchild, who did all right for himself to the tune of a hundred or two million dollars. On the other end of the row is Edward Polley, now dead, who ended up as president of the Fairchild Aerial Survey Company.

Here on the front row is Carrie Molinari, the first person of Italian ancestry to graduate from OHS. Next to her is Elizabeth Brownell, now Mrs. Gilbert Cargin of Unadilla. There are Edna Bishop, Osbornette Brainerd and Helen Merrill, as well as Ethel Kidder of Laurens and Lila Hall, who married Dr. Lloyd Warren of Franklin.

Helene Augustin, an artist who married William Sanders, is carrying a big muff, as is Charlotte Lunn, now Mrs. Leroy S. House. Next to her is Louise Kirchoff, now Mrs. Walter A. Bliss, and not far away is Margaret Morris, who married Robert E. Gardner.

We are well aware that we have given away the approximate ages of the boys in the group. As for the girls, they were all very young at the time.

## NATHAN H. BRIGGS

If the pioneers who built Oneonta and founded its industries and institutions could return to view what has developed from their thought and labor, utter astonishment would probably be their first reaction.

Such a pioneer was Nathan H. Briggs, whose originally small contracting firm has grown into a company which sells builders' supplies from ten yards in New York State and Pennsylvania.

But Nathan Briggs was more than an able businessman. His contributions to the religious and civic life of the community were substantial and lasting.

Nathan H. Briggs was born in Cherry Valley in 1846, the son of Godfrey and Aroa (Potter) Briggs. When he was still a lad the family moved to West Laurens, where he grew up. In 1870 he was married to Hannah Conger of that village.

They lived in Morris for about three years and in Ouleout for nine, Mr. Briggs plying his trade of carpenter. They moved to Oneonta in 1882 and Mr. Briggs became engaged in the general contracting business. For a couple of years he was associated with William Scott under the name of Scott and Briggs. After a few years on his own he formed a partnership with R. Wesley Miller, a dealer in hides, butter and wood, under the name of Briggs and Miller.

The firm's place of business was in a building which stood for years on the present site of the postoffice. This was built as a sawmill and carpenter shop in the 1860s by Brewer and McDonald.

The builders' supply business of Briggs and Miller grew apace and in 1902 the firm was dissolved, Mr. Miller continuing in the produce business and Mr. Briggs taking his son, Roscoe C. Briggs, into active partnership under the name of N. H. Briggs and Son.

In 1907 the company built the large brick building on Hickory Street now occupied by Homer Lyon. Following his father's death in 1909, Roscoe Briggs became sole owner under the name of the Briggs Lumber Company. The present plant on Lewis Street was built in 1919.

Upon coming to Oneonta Nathan Briggs joined the Free Baptist Church (now the Main Street Baptist) and became deeply interested in its affairs. He was long a member of the Board of Trustees and contributed generously to its support. For fifteen years he was superintendent of the Sunday School.

Mr. Briggs was a trustee of Oneonta village for nine years and was president for two years. Probably no man who ever occupied that office gave more time and attention to its affairs.

He was a member of the Board of Managers of Fox Memorial Hospital, of the YMCA, of Oneonta Masonic Lodge and of the Oneonta Club, giving freely of his time to all of these organizations.

Nathan T. Briggs died in 1909 and was buried in Glenwood Cemetery. The honorary bearers were the deacons of the church, A. E. Ceperley, Chauncey Ceperley, Dr. O. C. Tarbox, A. F. Wing, James Losee, R. W. Miller and Charles S. Firman, and six long time employees, Herbert Spencer, James Zeh, William Rowe, L. L. Parker, Frank Fish and John Elliott.

The active bearers were Charles Smith, Dr. A. W. Cutler, T. W. Stevens, L. H. Townsend, Joseph S. Lunn and Allen H. Wattles.

## STONE FARMHOUSE

With its thick stone walls and embrasured windows, it looks as though it might once have been a fort, but when the Stone Farmhouse on the Susquehanna near Otego was erected about 1830 the need for strongholds against the red coats or the redskins was long since gone. It is simply a beautiful, well built house standing on the site of the first dwelling in Otego township.

Albert E. Farone bought the old house and surrounding acres in 1942 and extensively remodeled the interior. On the outside, however, the ancient structure looks much as it did when Ezra Gates built it over a century and a quarter ago. It is located about a mile and a half east of the village of Otego between the back road to Oneonta and the river.

The only settlers of record in this region before the Revolution were the Ogdens. Daniel Ogden came from Dutchess County in 1774 or '75 and located on this farm, the first plot of land in the township to be occupied by a white man. The events of the Revolution drove Ogden and other settlers from the valley and when the Clinton-Sullivan expedition passed down the Susquehanna in August of 1779 the soldiers found only deserted farms.

The expedition, composed of 1,800 men and 220 boats, camped for a night on the north bank of the river opposite the Ogden farm. Diaries of two of the officers make explicit reference to the spot.

Following the end of hostilities, settlers flocked to the valley. Henry Shepherd came from Massachusetts in 1787 and started a ferry near the Ogden farm. Evidently Ogden did not return since Conradt Wiles was living in a log house on the site of the Stone Farmhouse soon after the war. He probably bought the land from Ogden but whether his rude dwelling was the one in which Daniel Ogden had resided is not known.

Ransom Hunt next owned the property, selling it to Ezra Gates, who built the present house about 1830. The structure was solidly constructed with stone walls two feet thick. The windows are narrow on the inside but flare out as if they were embrasures for cannon. This gives a wide view both up and down the river.

Gates sold the farm to Peter Scramling and through the years the title has passed through many hands, the family of Hiram Northrup owning the property for the longest period.

An interesting feature of the lovely place is that there was once an Indian village on the terrace on which the house is built. Small sherds of third period pottery have been found there but the majority of the many artifacts which the plow has turned up in past years indicate that the main occupation was archaic Algonquin and that those Indians lived there hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years ago.

The Stone Farmhouse is now in Otsego County but once it was in Delaware. When the latter county was formed from Otsego and Ulster in 1797, the boundary line was the Susquehanna. The part lying along the river was so inaccessible to the rest of the county that in 1822 the tier of lots extending from the south side of the stream to the top of the hills was restored to Otsego.

For the past few years the Farones have made the house their residence.



## GRAND OPENING

"The Cuban people will be eternally grateful to the United States for helping us gain our independence and the bonds of friendship between our two nations will ever be strong."

The Cuban ambassador to this country was entirely sincere when he spoke those words at the celebration in Oneonta on the occasion of the opening of the Oneonta, Cooperstown and Richfield Springs Railway but the year was 1904 and he had no knowledge of what the future would bring.

Senor Quesada had come down from Richfield, where he was summering, to assist in honoring an event which had been the dream of many — the linking by rail of the Mohawk and Susquehanna valleys. Through the years surveys had been made and promoters had tried to raise funds for the project. Now the dream had been realized.

The electric road was as important to communities in the Mohawk Valley as it was locally and about three hundred prominent citizens of Utica, Little Falls, Frankfort, Ilion, Herkimer and Mohawk, as well as many from towns along the line, came to Oneonta to join in the festivities.

The first of the cars which brought the visitors left Mohawk at 10:30 a.m. As The Star remarked: "Everybody was in a holiday mood, the car was abundantly stocked with good things and the popping of corks vied with the buzz of the trolley wheel."

It took the big, heavily loaded car an hour to climb the eight miles of ever ascending grade to Henderson, one thousand feet above Mohawk. From Henderson to Richfield, a distance of seven miles, there was a drop of three hundred feet. At Richfield was the Oneonta welcoming committee, composed of Charles H. Bowdish, president of the village; Dr. A. D. Getman, George I. Wilber, M. L. Keyes, E. Reed Ford, M. C. Hemstreet, George W. Fairchild, Henry Bull and Frank D. Miller.

President Bowdish and Mr. Bull boarded this car while the others waited for subsequent loads of excursionists. The cars were greeted with cheers from groups of people at every station and at many of the crossings. There was a continuous ovation all the way up Chestnut Street to the trolley station. Stores and residences throughout the village were decorated with the national colors and many Cuban flags were in evidence.

The first car reached Oneonta at 2:30 and the last about two hours later. Meal tickets had been distributed to the guests, who were escorted to the Central and Windsor Hotels for sumptuous repasts.

The exercises began at 5:30 in the Oneonta Theatre. President Bowdish presided and the speakers were Frank D. Blodgett of the Normal faculty; Cuban Ambassador Lonzalo de Quesada; Dr. Oren Root of Hamilton College; ex-Senator A. M. Mills of Little Falls; Assemblyman A. B. Steele of Herkimer; and Douglas W. Miller, an Oneonta attorney. The Citizens Band of Oneonta furnished music.

The rails are long since gone and many people today are unaware that there ever was such a road but at one time there were fourteen passenger round trips a day between Oneonta and Mohawk and eighteen between Oneonta and Cooperstown, in addition to scores of freight and milk runs. For thirty odd years it was a busy railroad.

## OLDEST HOUSES

When the historic McDonald tavern at the corner of Main and River Streets, built in 1810, was razed about two years ago, we nominated the house at 32 Linden Avenue as its successor as the oldest structure in Oneonta. This dwelling, erected in 1834 as the home of Dr. Samuel H. Case, once stood on Main Street on the site of the Triangle shoe store.

Subsequent research has disclosed two houses which we know to be older than the Case home and several others which may be more ancient. The handsome cottage at 307 Chestnut Street was built by Michael Yager about 1828 and is the oldest building of which we have the approximate date of construction.

The house at 29 Main Street was built by Mason Gilbert in 1831. He made hats in this location for several years. The double dwelling standing back from the street at 372-74 Main was erected some time in the 1830s by Sylvanus Smith, who operated a tannery and made boots, shoes and other leather goods in a plant on the Oneonta Creek somewhere back of the American Legion Home.

At least three other houses could be the oldest in Oneonta. The dwelling at 25 Wilcox Avenue now occupied by Merton Wilcox was probably built in the early 1800s. Lawrence Swart bought the land, then covered by a dense stand of hemlock, in 1804, but it is not known whether he erected the house.

The house at 285 River Street near the approach to the lower viaduct stands on land owned by Stoughton Alger in 1782. The builder is not known but L. B. Gates lived there in 1856 and probably for many years before that.

Josiah Richards built the house at 409 Chestnut Street in the early 1800s. It has been in the family ever since, the present owner being Mrs. Fred Richards.

There are many other very old buildings in Oneonta. The house at 379 Chestnut was built by one Beach about 1840. The columned house at 145 River Street, known for years as "the Edmunds place", was built in the 1840s by Stephen Parish.

The house at 22 Grove Street was erected in 1838 by Enoch Copley. It originally stood on the corner of Academy and Chestnut and was moved when the First Baptist church was built in 1902.

Daniel Gifford built the house at 138 East Street in 1835 and that same year E. D. Couse erected the dwelling at 507 Main on the corner of Youngman Avenue. When constructed, the east wing of this house was only one story.

We have frequently been asked concerning the house at 338 Main, just east of Oneonta Creek. Who built this house and when, we have not been able to discover but Asel Martin lived there in 1856. It has been said that this was once a tavern but the probability is that it was never used for that purpose.

The house at 83 Chestnut now owned by Temple Beth El was built in 1864 by James H. Keyes, an attorney. The Harry Goldsmith family lived there for years, Mrs. Goldsmith being a daughter of Mr. Keyes.

## A BIG BLAZE

Oneontans breathed a faint sigh of relief after the Morris Brothers fire on the morning of December 23, 1910. They were sorry for those who had suffered financial loss or inconvenience but this was the third big blaze in two years and calamities usually ran in threes. Perhaps this would end the bad fires for awhile. (As a matter of fact it did).

The Wooden Row on the south side of Main Street in the space now occupied by the yellow brick blocks extending from the Jack and Jill Shop to Turner's burned on December 27, 1908. The Central Hotel, on the site of the Hotel Oneonta, went up in flames on the morning of January 16, 1910. Then, not quite a year later, came the Morris fire.

Destroyed by the flames were the big Morris Brothers flour and feed store and grain elevator on the south side of Market Street, the adjacent Otsego and Herkimer freight station and car barns, a two story building leased by the Morris as a storehouse, the small grocery store and residence of Angelo Powell and a little structure used by John B. Chase as a blacksmith shop and home.

The fire, which started in the rear of the car barn, was discovered by trainmen on the D.&H. sleeper which pulled into the station at 3 a.m. D. F. Keyes, who was a passenger, turned in the alarm. The fire department was soon on the scene but the trolley barn was already a mass of flames and the fire was spreading rapidly to adjacent buildings.

The Otsego and Herkimer freight depot and car barn, which stood at the foot of Chestnut Street, had been used years earlier as a mineral paint factory. When the electric line was built it was remodeled and used as a power station until the plant at Hartwick was constructed. At the time of the fire it contained three passenger and two freight cars, all of which were burned.

The Chase blacksmith shop had an interesting history. It was Oneonta's first firehouse and originally stood where Broad Street now meets Main. When Broad was opened in 1864 it was moved to what is now the corner of Broad and Market Streets where M. G. Connell used it as a blacksmith shop until he built the present Winney Hotel in 1886. It had been on the Market Street location since that time.

Next west of the car barns was a two story frame building thirty feet wide and one hundred fifty deep which Morris Brothers used as a storage place for flour and grain. This soon caught fire and its highly inflammable contents burned fiercely.

Despite all the firemen could do, the large brick veneer Morris Brothers feed store and grain elevator next door was soon in flames. The building, erected in 1890, was forty feet wide and one hundred eighty-five deep. Its contents burned like gunpowder and the best that the firemen could accomplish was to keep the conflagration from spreading to the nearby J. O. and G. N. Rowe feed store and to the McFee and Borst lumber mill across the street.

Work was started at once on new fireproof buildings, which are now part of the West-Nesbitt plant.



## THOSE EARLY AUTOS

The first motor car on our block on Walnut Street was a duzy. It was a luxurious and powerful Cadillac of 1903 vintage with a one cylinder motor tucked under the front seat. The car was cranked from the side and sported such conveniences as a bulb horn on the steering post and two kerosene headlights. What more could be desired in the way of transportation?

The automobile is now so commonplace that it is hard for us to realize that we saw the first motor car in Oneonta, a 1900 Locomobile, and that nearly the entire development of the auto has occurred within our lifetime.

The internal combustion engine was first used in a motor car by George B. Selden in 1877 but the 1893 Duryea was the "first marketable automobile in America" and it was not until 1898 that the first car, a Winton, was sold. From that time on the industry mushroomed and between two and three thousand different makes of cars have been manufactured in this country at one time or another.

About one hundred and twenty-five steam cars were in the market during the early years, the White and the Stanley Steamer being the best known. From 1900 to 1925 at least twenty-five companies made electric cars, which they advertised as "quiet, clean, stylish and easy to operate — the only car for a lady." These had their drawbacks, however, among them the fact that they would run only forty to sixty miles before it became necessary to recharge the batteries.

We can recall the names of sixty or seventy cars which were sold in Oneonta or were owned here in the old days. The advertisements in the local papers about the merits of these cars make fascinating reading.

The 1905 Ford, selling for \$850, was the "Boss of the Road" and had "absolutely no smell, noise or jolt". The Packard slogan was "Ask the Man Who Owns One". This was one of the prestige cars of the period together with the Cadillac, Locomobile, Lozier, Winton and Pierce-Arrow. Among the air cooled jobs were the Knox, Victor, Aerocar, Adams-Farwell and Franklin.

The first Buick was built in 1903 and had an amazing two cylinder twenty-one horse power motor. In 1906 appeared one of the least expensive cars ever built, the Success. It had a two horse power motor and a speed up to eighteen miles an hour and would run a hundred miles on a gallon of gas. You could buy the steel tired model for \$250. If you wanted rubber tires, you paid \$25 more.

In 1907 you could buy a Ford runabout with four cylinders and fifteen h.p. for \$500. You paid \$825 for a Maxwell (including magneto) and if you wanted the best Haynes, you shelled out \$3,500.

By 1907 the price range of automobiles was not yet within the reach of the upper middle class but it was getting there. In that year the Jewel and the Federal, both runabouts, sold for \$600.

The 1907 Oakland, which later became the Pontiac, had a new variety of engine that rotated in a counter-clockwise direction. The Oakland had a V-8 motor as early as 1916.

The first Plymouth was manufactured in 1908, not by Chrysler but by the Commercial Motor Truck Company of Plymouth, Ohio. It was friction driven.

## YE OLDE APOTHECARY

The pharmacist read the prescription with mixed feelings. It called for pills with phosphorus as an ingredient and that meant real work since the stuff had to be handled under water. On the other hand he could get fifty cents for the prescription and that was a good price for a few hours labor.

That was only one of the problems facing the druggist around the turn of the century. In the filling of prescriptions he had few of the facilities available today. He had to make his elixers and tinctures, roll the pills which the doctor ordered and make the tablets and ointments.

Some of the old pharmacists whose names come to mind were Dr. M. L. Ford, Tom Marsh, Ed Ford, Burt Gildersleeve, A. D. Rowe and the Dickson brothers, as well as Ralph McCune, George Slade, Gene Card, Albert Hutson and George E. Moore, our father. Oldtimers still in the game are Henry Sherman, Hunter Reid and Marty Northrup.

The old time drugstore was quite different from the pharmacy of today. Little merchandise was carried that was not related to medicine and the healing arts. Most stores had a soda fountain (with the ice cream and syrups made on the premises), a cigar counter and a section devoted to toilet articles and preparations. But there were no alarm clocks, cameras, magazines or flashlights.

There were few packaged drugs or medicines in the old days. The store shelves were lined with bottles of chemicals and drug mixtures. There were the various acids, from acetic to nitric. Bottles of aqua rosa and eau de Cologne rubbed shoulders with containers of different tinctures and elixers.

In the drawers below were the dry drugs and herbs, such as ipecac and mustard, flowers of sulphur and powdered senna, camphor, acacia and asafetida. Here were cinnamon bark and licorice root, sunflower seeds and capsicum.

There was always a section of such patent medicines as Swamproot and Hood's Sarsaparilla, Pierce's Golden Discovery, Father John's Medicine, Peruna and Lydia Pinkham's, not to mention Hostetter's Bitters and Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People.

In the cellar could be found barrels of wine and whiskey (strictly for medicinal purposes, of course) and containers of alcohol (fifty cents a gallon), concentrated ammonia and other bulk materials.

In the back of the store was the prescription department where the pharmacist spent much of his time. Here, in addition to mixing drugs, he made his own private remedies, for about every druggist in those days had a few nostrums which he had devised. We recall that our dad had a cold remedy and a hair dressing for which he had quite a market.

In the old days the druggist often assisted the physician and surgeon. Our father helped in over fifty major operations, giving the anesthetic and rendering other aid. The operations were usually performed on the leather examining table in the surgeon's office.

Drugstores were always designated by show globes, which were large glass devices filled with colored water and displayed in the windows. These are coming back into use in some parts of the country but the stores behind them will never again be as they once were.

## MORRIS OF MORRIS

The American Revolution was in reality a civil war and as happens in that type of conflict, brothers were often on opposite sides. So it was in the distinguished Morris family, whose seat was the beautiful tract of Morrisania on the Hudson in what is now upper New York City.

Three brothers, Staats Long, Lewis and Richard Morris, lived there on their vast acreage. Staats Long was an ardent Royalist and became an officer in the king's service and later governor of Quebec. His wife was the beautiful Scottish Dowager Duchess of Gordon.

In 1769 the English king granted Staats a patent of thirty thousand acres in the Butternut valley, located south of a line running east and west about two and one-half miles below the present village of Morris. He visited his land but once and made little endeavor to settle it.

When trouble came between the colonies and the mother country, Staats Morris remained loyal to the king while his brothers supported the American cause and offered their services and their fortunes to the Congress. Lewis was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence.

In July of 1776 while Lewis Morris was attending the session of the Congress which passed the Declaration, a large body of British troops landed upon his estate at Morrisania. They burned a thousand acres of valuable timber, carried off his stock and drove off his family and servants.

After the war the state stripped Staats of his holdings and gave them to Lewis and Richard as indemnification of their losses. The brothers never made personal use of their land but Jacob Morris, son of Lewis, came into the valley in 1787, settled on a thousand acres at the north end of the patent, became one of the most prominent men in Otsego County and gave the Morris name to a township and a village.

Jacob Morris was born at Morrisania in 1755. His father had intended that he become a merchant but upon the outbreak of the Revolution the young man offered himself to the American cause. He served with distinction throughout the conflict, leaving the army with the rank of general.

He set out for the Butternut valley in 1787, going by way of Otsego Lake. There he purchased a bateau for eight gallons of rum and proceeded down the Susquahanna to the mouth of the Unadilla river and then up that stream to the Butternut creek and thence to his land.

There were already settlers in the upper part of the valley, among them Lulls, Thurstons, Moores and Knapps, but the Morris section was still a virgin wilderness. He had brought parts for a sawmill with him and his first task was to set up the mill, cut timber and erect a frame dwelling, the first of its kind in the region.

Another house followed that and in 1808 he built the present Morris Manor House, a landmark in that section. Morrises have occupied the venerable mansion for over a century and a half and their influence in the valley has been very great. The home is now owned by Mrs. Lewis Rutherford Morris, widow of a great-grandson of General Jacob Morris.



## AS IT WAS IN 1860

"Wanted: 10,000 sheep pelts. Ezra Gifford."

Today all the sheep in the county would supply only a small fraction of that number but the pre-bellum economy of the region was vastly different than it is today and when the advertisement appeared in the *Oneonta Herald* on August 15, 1860, several hundred thousand sheep grazed the Otsego hills and there was a tannery in nearly every community.

Let's see what else is contained in that century old copy of *Oneonta's* first successful newspaper. It was still owned and edited by its founder, L. P. Carpenter, who a few years later was to sell it to George W. Reynolds and move to Morris, where he started the *Chronicle*.

The paper was staunchly Republican (it was to stay so throughout its life of nearly a century) and under the masthead it carried the names of Abraham Lincoln and Hannibal Hamlin, candidates for president and vice-president of the United States in the upcoming elections. The editorials were on such timely subjects as "Squatter Sovereignty", "The Homestead Bill" and "The Dred Scott Decision".

There was as yet no railroad in the valley and stagecoaches provided the only public transportation. "For the information of the public in general" the paper stated that stages would leave *Oneonta* every morning at 7 o'clock for Cooperstown and Fort Plain; at 3 a.m. for Utica via Morris and New Berlin; at 3 a.m. for Deposit by way of Unadilla and Bainbridge; at 1 p.m. for Albany via Worcester and Schoharie; and at 3 a.m. on Fridays only for Hancock by way of Franklin and Walton.

The county fair was a great institution in those days and there were advertisements for ones at Unadilla, Hobart, Cooperstown, Sherburne, Afton and Oxford. It would be some years before the Central New York Fair at *Oneonta* would be launched.

Hops were a big crop in Otsego County in 1860 and the price quoted was from 12½ to 15 cents per pound. Growers were urged to use more care in picking and packing the product.

An interesting advertisement concerns the *Oneonta English and Classical High School*, a private institution conducted by Mrs. Meigs Case. There was as yet no public high school and this venture provided the only education in the village above the grade school level.

The school year was divided into three terms of fourteen weeks each. Board was \$35 a term and tuition ranged from \$1.50 per term per subject up to \$5 for Higher English and \$8 for Music.

Among the advertisers were such firms as Ford and Cope, general merchants, and L. S. Osborn, whose daughter Aurelia married Reuben L. Fox and in whose memory *Oneonta's* hospital was built and endowed. H. M. Schofield ran a cooper shop near the *Oneonta Creek* bridge, Ferguson and Adams were dealers in hardware and Shepherd and Ford conducted a general store.

Kerosene oil, a new product, was being advertised and "hoop skirts, every style" were being carried by about every storekeeper.

## BELOVED AUGIE

If you were a veteran and especially if you belonged to the American Legion, you had it made with Augie. Not only would he care for your bodily ills but he had the power, with a few strokes of his pen, to soothe your afflictions of the spirit.

But Dr. George W. Augustin was much more than a zealous Legionnaire and a good fellow. He was one of Oneonta's most respected physicians who was chief of staff of Fox Hospital, and city health officer for many years.

Dr. Augustin was born in Jersey City in 1876. He received his early education at Hoboken Academy and Stevens College, going from there to the New York Homeopathic College. He interned in Lowell, Mass., and served his residency in the Massachusetts General Hospital in Cambridge.

For awhile he was a staff doctor in Grace Hospital, Detroit, and then was health officer of that city for two years. He moved to Oneonta in 1907 and in 1909 Mayor Albert Morris appointed him city health officer, in which capacity he served until his death.

Typhoid fever, diphtheria and smallpox were scourges a half century ago and Dr. Augustin took steps to eradicate them. He cleaned up the conditions which caused typhoid and was the leader in establishing clinics for immunization against diphtheria and smallpox.

He was instrumental in setting up a system of health examinations in the city schools two years before this procedure was required by law. He also had an active part in creating the county tuberculosis sanatorium at Mt. Vision.

Dr. Augustin had been the medical officer of Oneonta's Company G for nine years prior to our entry into World War I in 1917. When war was declared he offered his services to the federal government and was made regimental surgeon of the 104th Field Artillery, 27th Division, with the rank of major.

He served with that outfit in the St. Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne offensives, was wounded in action and received a citation for bravery under fire. He became interested in the American Legion, which had been organized in Paris in March of 1919, and when he returned to Oneonta he set about organizing a post of the young organization here. He was one of four doctors (the others were Drs. Cutler, Smith, and McMenamin) who with eleven other veterans signed the charter application.

Augie, as he was known to his friends, was very active in the affairs of Oneonta Post and served as its commander. He was one of several Oneonta Legionnaires who attended the 1927 convention of the organization in Paris.

Dr. Augustin might be said to be the father of the Otsego County organization of the Legion. He helped form posts in Unadilla, Cooperstown and Richfield Springs and was the first county commander.

He was a member of the Universalist Church and of the Elks and Kiwanis. He maintained homes in Oneonta and in Laurens and the hospitality which he and his wife, the former Mrs. Blanche Dewey whom he married in 1908, dispensed in the latter residence was legendary.

Dr. George W. Augustin died in March of 1936. His body lay in state in the First Presbyterian church and full military honors were accorded him.

Fortunate was the man who was attached to Dr. Augustin for rations — of the spirit.

## ONE OF THE GOOD YEARS

It was the summer of the last of the good years; the lull before the storm of war and revolution which has racked the world during the past half century. How were things in Oneonta during that August of 1913?

The news from abroad gave little hint of the trouble to come. The preparations being made to impeach Governor William Sulzer were causing some little stir in the state capital but here in Oneonta life was calm and peaceful. The Republican, Democratic and Progressive parties were girding themselves for the mayoralty fight (Republican Joseph S. Lunn would win it) but there was little promise of excitement.

The Eagles held their annual clambake at Bull Hill out in the country west of the city and the event was notable for the fact that it would be the last affair of its kind held in that popular place. The Oneonta Country Club had just been organized and the members had decided to buy a part of the Josiah S. Bull farm for its golf course.

The Club had considered a location on Goodyear Lake but the proximity of Bull Hill to the city and the fact that the trolley company had agreed to charge only five cents for the ride decided the matter. A committee consisting of George B. Baird, K. E. Morgan and Edward E. Ford was appointed to purchase 75 acres of the farm for \$10,000. This done, work was immediately started on draining the swampy land between the bluff and the creek.

Work was progressing on razing the old Briggs and Miller sawmill at the corner of Main and South Main Streets and readying the site for the erection of the new postoffice, which would cost about \$75,000, according to Charles J. Beams, who had just been appointed postmaster.

A state inspector had checked the local bastille and had condemned the structure and strongly recommended that it be replaced with a new jail. Inspectors had been saying this for years and would be making the same statements a half century later.

Three physicians, Drs. Francis H. Marx, David H. Mills and Norman W. Getman, had announced their intention of settling in Oneonta. Lee D. VanWoert had just passed his bar examinations and had entered the law offices of his father-in-law, J. Fremont Thompson.

Plans were announced for the annual automobile hill climbing contest at Richfield Springs and George Baird said that he would donate a cup to the winner of the secret time run from Oneonta to the resort village. Fifty years later sport car enthusiasts would make the same kind of runs.

All of thirty-six different makes of cars would compete at Richfield. Look over the following list of automobiles entered and see how many you can remember:

Buick, Detroit, Ford and Studebaker; Maxwell, Reo and Ohio; R.C.H., Hupmobile, Regal and Cartercar; Jackson, Paige, Nyberg, Metz and Oakland; Apperson, Cole and Chalmers; Hayes, Cadillac, Velie, Hudson and Michigan; Auburn, National, Stutz, Mercer and Marmon; Lozier, Packard and Pierce; Franklin, Peerless, Stevens-Duryea and Overland.



## GREAT CANNON TRAGEDY

"The tops of the heads of the three young men were blown off but otherwise they were uninjured." This classic bit of understatement in the columns of the *Oneonta Herald* referred to one of the most tragic episodes in the history of Otsego County.

When you travel from Morris to South New Berlin you pass through a four corners known as Dimock Hollow. On a knoll to the left just beyond the junction is a stone monument nearly obscured by weeds and brush.

If you take the trouble to investigate you will find on the shaft the names of Fred G. Sage, Albert Sargent and John H. Dixon, followed by this inscription: "In remembrance of Those killed on this place August 28, 1888, by the bursting of Great Cannon at the raising of Repub. Flag Pole. Respectfully erected by the Public."

In the old days people took their politics seriously. A presidential election meant speech making and invariably the raising of a flagpole by each party. In 1888 Benjamin Harrison, a Republican, was out to banish Grover Cleveland from the White House (he did) and feeling was running high.

The Republicans of the region planned a pole raising at Dimock Hollow on August 28. There were only a few houses, a cheese factory and a school in the hamlet but it was centrally located and easy of access.

It was planned to raise the 124 foot pole at noon but by 7 a.m. a few young men had gathered. They had secured a small cannon which they were to fire at intervals during the morning. It was a six pounder of three inch bore and weighed about eight hundred pounds.

The first blast knocked the piece off its carriage and after that it had to be fired on the ground. A Civil War veteran warned that the heavy charges might cause the gun to burst but the men continued to use an excessive amount of powder.

By noon about five hundred men, women and children had assembled on the knoll near the factory to witness the raising. When it was found that more tackle was needed it was announced that the group would march to the nearby grove of Allen Backus, have lunch, listen to a speech and then return for the ceremony.

The Garrattsville band was ready to start the parade when the cannoneers decided to fire one more shot. They poured in an extra heavy charge of powder, jammed in wadding and then tamped sand into the barrel. The fuse was ignited and within seconds the gun blew up with a tremendous roar, sending jagged pieces of iron in every direction.

The three victims, who were standing in the crowd about sixty feet from the cannon, were killed instantly as heavy sections of metal smashed their skulls. Why others were not killed or injured is a matter for wonderment.

John H. Dixon, twenty-three, was from Morris. His father, two sisters and a brother were in the throng and witnessed his death. Albert Sargent, also twenty-three, was from South New Berlin and his father saw the tragedy. Fred G. Sage, twenty-one, was also from South New Berlin. He was a graduate of Fredonia Normal School and in less than a month would have become principal of the Edmeston school.

The monument, paid for by public subscription, was erected the following year.

## *A SHOOTING AFFRAY*

It was fully an hour after the gun battle when Walter S. Whipple realized that he had been hit. Experiencing a smarting sensation on his left chest, he found that a bullet had pierced his coat, smashed a pencil and flattened itself against a metal spectacle case in his vest pocket.

The shooting affray took place on an August evening in 1914 at the boarding house of Mrs. Harriet Machesney at 75 Chestnut Street when Harry Hamilton, a lodger, went berserk, wounded three persons and endangered the lives of many others. A police bullet finally brought down the drink-crazed man.

Mrs. Machesney, a respected woman of eighty-three, conducted the boarding house in a dwelling on the corner of Chestnut Street and Watkins Avenue which was later occupied for years by Dr. Edward J. Parish. It was a split level house with the dining room and kitchen on the lowest floor.

Hamilton, twenty-nine, a carpenter employed by McFee and Borst, had roomed there but a few days. When he appeared for dinner on the evening in question it was evident that he had been drinking heavily but no incident occurred.

After his meal the young man sat on the porch for a few minutes and then walked around the house and entered by the basement door. Mrs. Machesney and a domestic, Mrs. Blanche Radley, were clearing the table. Hamilton asked the young woman to accompany him to the movies that evening and when she refused he began to choke her and to pound her with his fists. Suddenly he pulled a revolver from his pocket and shot her in the thigh.

Meanwhile Mrs. Machesney had gone to the upstairs hall and phoned the police. Hamilton followed her and shot her through the abdomen. The two women, bleeding profusely, ran to the street and screamed for help. Mr. Whipple, Frank G. Sherman and Chester A. Miller, who were passing, took them to a neighbor's home and summoned the ambulance.

Hamilton stationed himself on the porch and warned the fast growing crowd that he would kill anyone who approached. John Ingalls of 97 Chestnut Street started for the steps and the maniac fired four shots at him. All went wild and crashed through the windows of a passing trolley. At the first shot Dr. George Augustin told his fellow passengers to drop to the floor and none was hit.

By this time Police Chief Thomas Blizard, Officer James Stapleton, Fire Chief John Crotty and Fireman Ben Voorhees had arrived. The firemen ran to the rear of the house while Stapleton drew his revolver and ran for the steps. Hamilton opened fire on the courageous officer, hitting him on the left arm. Stapleton dodged behind a tree, took aim and shot the gunman in the chest.

The badly wounded man staggered back into the house and the officers followed. A bloody trail led up the stairs to Hamilton's bedroom where he was found on the floor, the pistol still in his hand. He was alive but died within a few minutes.

In the excitement Mr. Whipple did not feel the impact of the bullet but was probably hit by one of the shots which missed Stapleton. Mrs. Machesney eventually recovered. The wounds of the others were not serious.

## HUNTINGTON'S GIFT

"I propose to donate to the city of Oneonta the Huntington residence and all other property that I own adjacent thereto, for the purpose of a public library and park, upon the following conditions:"

The letter from Henry E. Huntington to Mayor Andrew E. Ceperley dated November 1, 1917, was the first indication that the famous railroad magnate and art collector was to make a magnificent gift to the city where he was born and grew to manhood and where his forebears slept.

The conditions to the gift were few. He agreed to pay all of the costs of grading, laying walks and planting trees and shrubs as well as remodeling the house for library purposes and further stipulated that he would set up a trust fund (it would be \$200,000) for maintenance and operation. The city was to agree to furnish light and water.

Mr. Huntington specified that the property would be given as a memorial to his parents, Solon and Harriet (Saunders) Huntington, and must be called "Huntington Park and Library." A further condition was that if the property should be used at any time by the city for any other purposes than as a library and park, title would revert to his estate.

The Huntington farm once stretched back of the house to the hills, embracing most of the Church Street area and part of Center Street. Solon Huntington opened several streets through the land, selling lots along them.

In anticipation of his gift, Henry Huntington had quietly purchased property adjacent to his own and at the time he made the donation he had title to all of the land now occupied by the park with the exception of four houses on Church Street and one on Dietz.

On the latter street there was a house and lot north of the old theatre entrance with a frontage of 110 feet and a depth of 100. This was known for years as the Sigsbee property. Mr. Huntington bought this and added it to his other Dietz Street footage.

There were four houses on Church Street, owned by Rev. E. A. Martin, who was the Methodist district superintendent, Homer G. Ford, F. E. Harrington and Mrs. William H. Mosher. Instead of asking the city to institute condemnation proceedings, Mr. Huntington paid for these properties the prices asked by their owners. For the Mosher house he gave \$7,500, a considerable price for a frame house in those days.

Upon receipt of the letter from Mr. Huntington, Mayor Ceperley called a special meeting of the Common Council at which the offer was accepted and a resolution adopted expressing the city's deep appreciation. Although it was late in the year, work was started within days, the first job being to uproot the many fruit trees standing on the plateau back of the house, which had comprised the family orchard.

World War I was on and it was difficult to get workers and materials so the venture progressed slowly. Eventually the grading was finished, the walks were in, the landscaping was completed and the house remodeled. On July 9, 1920, Huntington Memorial Park and Library were opened to the public.



## THE CLAN McDONALD

Not a street, an avenue or an alley, not a tablet, a boulder or a marker of any kind, save only a simple stone in Riverside Cemetery inscribed "James McDonald and Lucinda Prentice, his wife," recalls to the present generation this influential pioneer family.

And strangely enough, since James had sixteen children and twenty grandchildren not a descendant is known to live in this vicinity.

Nicholas, of the Scottish Clan McDonald, was the immigrant ancestor, coming to America in 1735 and settling near Ballston about 1763. In 1792 a son, Joseph, came to what is now known as the Oneonta Plains and opened a tavern and store on the site of the old Pond Lily Hotel near Country Club road.

In 1796 his older brother James joined him and soon took over the business, Joseph moving up the valley to what is now the corner of River and Main Streets. He had purchased the old Vanderwerker grist mill on the river, which he dismantled and moved to a spot on Silver Creek, which then ran a much different course than at present, near the present Elmore Mills.

Joseph added a sawmill in 1803 and operated the two for three years, then selling out to James and moving west. The latter ran the mills until 1829 when he sold the property to Peter Collier and Jared Goodyear.

In 1810 James McDonald built a house and tavern on the northeast corner of Main and River Streets, living there until his death in 1834. This house, for years the oldest structure within the city limits, was razed in 1961.

In this building the first postoffice in the hamlet was established in 1817 and McDonald was chosen as the first postmaster. The name selected by him for the office was Milfordville and the former names of McDonald's Mills and McDonald's Bridge which the community had borne, passed into history.

Squire McDonald was an active man. Besides conducting the tavern and acting as postmaster, he ran the saw and grist mills. His land holdings in the village were extensive. At various times he was assessor, town commissioner of schools, fence viewer, path commissioner, justice of the peace and commissioner of highways, not to mention his work as an officer in the state militia.

He was married three times, his wives being Huldah Goff (his spouse when he came here), Lucy (Manter) Derby and Lucy (Prentice) Youmans. By them he had sixteen children. They and their offspring married into several well known local families, among them Houghtaling, Watkins, Wright, Strong, Fritts, Knapp, Angell, Mulford and Parish.

Although no descendants of James McDonald are now living in this vicinity, several attained considerable prominence elsewhere. A grandson, Charles Edgar Fritts, invented the principle which made sound movies possible.

Two in direct line of descent became famous as writers, Willard Huntington Wright, under the pseudonym of S. S. VanDine, created the famous fictional detective, Philo Vance, and a cousin, Watkins Epps Wright, was a successful novelist.

The two latter were grandsons of Philander and Harriet (Watkins) Wright, who ninety years ago owned the old Bundy house which stood where Bresee's now is.

## A ROCKY ROAD

The trip from Oneonta to Mohawk, Herkimer or Utica on the old Southern New York electric line wasn't the smoothest ride in the world. In fact it was so rough at times that it had some therapeutic value, as in the case of the local woman who started on a trip one day suffering much pain from a crick in her back. Ere she had finished the journey the jouncing had effected certain spinal adjustments and the pain was gone.

If you were affluent, your bouncing could be done amid pleasant surroundings. In 1901 the line purchased a parlor car that was really elegant. It had fine wicker chairs, carpeting, curtains and an observation platform on the rear enclosed by a highly polished brass rail. There was even a porter, Clarence Battles, who was seasonally clad in spotless white or blue.

This luxurious car, called the Otsego, made a round trip each day between Oneonta and either Utica or Herkimer. The extra charge was only fifteen cents. Many famous people of the time, including Theodore Roosevelt, were guests on the car. The Busch family of brewing fame, which summered at Cooperstown, often chartered it.

Winters were hard on the road. North of Richfield the snow often drifted far above the cars, making the right of way a virtual snow tunnel. The big rotary plows were often unequal to the task of keeping the tracks clear and many a car was snowbound. Sometimes passengers would fight their way through the drifts to a nearby farmhouse and bring back hot coffee and food but often the occupants of the car were marooned, far from immediate help.

One night in December of 1916 two cars containing about a hundred passengers, mostly girls from Oneonta Normal on their way home for the holidays, stalled north of Richfield and were not rescued until the next morning.

On St. Patrick's Day in 1917 we had an unforgettable personal experience. We left Utica at 1:30 p.m. with our college class basketball team which was scheduled to play OHS that night. The car got through the heavy snow area but a few miles above Hartwick encountered thick ice on the rails and there we stayed all night. It was 10 a.m. when we reached Oneonta after spending twenty hours on the trolley. The fuel for the small stove which heated the car was soon exhausted and we were stiff with cold when we were rescued.

The open cars, used for excursions and at Fair time, were a delight. During its early years the line operated a small amusement place called Otsego Park on the banks of the Otego Creek between West Oneonta and Laurens. A rustic bridge crossed the creek to a wooded area containing picnic tables and concession stands. This was closed in 1906 since the larger park at Canadarago Lake was preferred.

The company purchased a tract of land on the eastern shore of the lake and spent considerable money developing it. There were frequent special trips to the lake from Oneonta, Utica, Mohawk and Herkimer and the excursionists could indulge in swimming, fishing, boating, roller skating and dancing.

The trip to Canadarago in an open car on a pleasant Sunday afternoon was a rare experience for a kid.

## WILBER WILL AGAIN

"The several bequests herein made to the City of Oneonta are made for the reason of my love for the city, and my interests in its welfare, and the confidence and hope of its future growth and its continued prosperity; It is My Home, I Love it as such and there is no place on earth like it for me. Its churches, Its schools, Its enterprises have been a part of my life, as it was also that of my beloved wife."

The last will and testament of George I. Wilber, the complex legal aspects of which we have previously discussed, is a most remarkable document. It gives great insight into the nature of the man and makes very clear the motivation behind actions which when taken appeared to be without reason.

It cannot be denied that there were selfish motives behind some of his apparent generosity but the above excerpt from the will shows his deep and sincere affection for the community where he had spent most of his life and where he had made his fortune.

The Wilber National Bank was his particular pride and joy and the will makes abundantly clear his regard for the institution. His fear that the bank would lose prestige and strength following his death (it didn't) led him to attempt to tie up the estate for five years so that the funds would be available to the bank during the interim.

The will left Wilber Bank stock to the directors and to certain employees. In this connection the document says: "I have worked hard and unselfishly for years to bring the Wilber National Bank to its present high standing and it is my earnest desire and request that each legatee named herein shall keep the said mentioned stock so long as he shall live, and not sell the same to any PROMOTOR OR SHYSTER, or anyone connected with any other bank, and always work unselfishly for the best interest of said bank and see that only safe and conservative directors and officers are elected to manage its affairs, who will put the interests of said bank 'FIRST' regardless of any personal benefit."

It was provided in the will that the legacies would revert to the estate in case the recipients were not in the employ of the bank at the time of Mr. Wilber's demise. The will further states: "It is my further wish that each and every one of the employees of said bank, as well as all others mentioned herein, shall be temperate, industrious citizens, diligent in their several callings and ready to do good to all, according to their abilities and opportunities."

The will gave \$100,000 to the First Methodist Church for a new building, as well as several lots on Ford Avenue. In this regard it said: "THE OLD CHURCH still looks good to me, and it would seem to be a great pity and waste of money to tear it down; A part of my success in life is owing to the fact that I have never allowed my pride to run away with my 'pocketbook'. Should Oneonta continue to grow as we all now expect, it will not be many years before there will be a demand for two Methodist Episcopal Churches within our City limits, and in anticipation of this demand I am making the above Devise . . . so that the above premises could be used for a location."



## ALL OF FORTY MILES

The Joneses were elated when the day dawned bright and clear. They had invited their neighbors, the Browns, to take a trip to Cooperstown with them in their new 1905 Pope-Hartford automobile and rain would have prevented the outing. As it was, the forty mile trip to and from the county seat was a somewhat daring venture.

The journey got under way soon after breakfast. Jones and Brown put on long dusters, adjusted their tourist caps and goggles and climbed into the front seat. Their wives, clad in striped silk rubberized auto coats and with scarves tied around their wide leghorn hats and fastened under the chin, entered the car through a door in the rear of the tonneau.

Once outside the village limits Jones let the car out and twice came close to the auto's advertised speed of thirty miles an hour. The road was much too rough, however, for that dizzy pace to be maintained for long. Several times Jones stopped the car to avoid frightening approaching horses.

Minor disaster struck after a few miles. A tire went flat and a good half hour was spent fixing it. After jacking up the car, the men worked the tire off the wheel and then removed the inner tube, taking care not to damage the valve stem.

The leak was found and a patch was put over it. Fortunately there was a watering trough nearby and the tube was immersed in the water. No air bubbles appearing, it was apparent that the repair job had been effective.

The tube was eased back into the casing, inflated with a hand pump and put back on the rim. The men washed their hands in a "Collapsible Rubber Auto Wash Basin" and the trip was resumed.

Two incidents marred the homeward ride. Soon after the party left Cooperstown it started to rain. Jones stopped the machine and took a rubberized storm apron from under the seat. This had holes for the heads of the occupants of the auto. Each hole had a collar which could be fastened around the neck. The bodies of the motorists had ample protection from the brief storm but heads got thoroughly soaked.

There was a bit of tragi-comedy on the hill just out of Colliers. The car tonneau was detachable and the owner had taken it off the day before and substituted a box since he had some articles to transport. When he put it back on, he forgot to fasten the hooks which held it to the frame.

At the steepest part of the grade the tonneau slid off, taking with it the ladies, while their husbands pursued their way. The accident was soon discovered, however, and everybody and everything reunited.

The first stop upon reaching Oneonta was the Star office on Broad Street. A motor trip to Cooperstown and back was quite an event and Harry Lee would want to know about it. The next morning all of Oneonta learned that the Jones and Brown families had made the trip and with tire trouble only once, which was considerably under par for the course.

The next time you get into your comfortable car and take a trip without trouble of any kind, just remember that it was not always so.

## WILD BLUE YONDER

When the rope attached to the captive balloon broke and the big bag soared skyward, few at the Oneonta Fair that day in 1905 thought that the fifteen year old passenger would ever be seen alive again.

Those who knew Floyd Wallace, however, had faith that the lad would find a way out of his predicament. His stepfather, who had a booth on the grounds, simply remarked, "He'll be back all right tonight", and kept on selling peanuts.

He was right. Floyd slept in his own bed that night but after an experience which he would never forget. Others remembered it, too, and for years kept reminding him of it, to his great annoyance.

Ever since he had seen editor Ora Tipple take his famous parachute drop three years before, Floyd Wallace had longed to imitate the feat, or at least to take a ride in a balloon. His chance came when Phelps and Burke brought their act to the Oneonta Fair in September of 1905.

During the day hundreds of people, in groups of three or four, would take a trip aloft in the basket of the balloon, which was tethered with a six hundred foot rope operating on a steam winch. On the last trip of the afternoon Burke would attach his parachute to the balloon, swing into the air on a trapeze and cut loose when maximum height was reached.

On September 20 Phelps permitted young Wallace to make the last trip as the sole passenger. All went well at first with Floyd enjoying to the utmost the beautiful panorama which unfolded as the balloon rose.

Finally Burke cut the parachute loose, made a graceful drop and landed safely not far from the grounds. The winch started pulling the balloon down. When it was about one hundred feet above the ground a gust of wind sent the swaying rope into the winch cogs and the strands parted. Up soared the bag with its youthful passenger and disappeared from sight over Pencil Rock in the direction of Davenport while the crowd watched in horror.

Meanwhile, back in the balloon, our young hero was far from idle. At first he was scared but soon recovered from his fright. He found the cord which should open a valve and let gas out of the bag but the apparatus would not operate. It was found later that the valve had been sealed with wax.

There was but one thing to do and the boy did it. He climbed the rigging hand over hand and cut a big hole in the bag with his pocket knife. The balloon began to settle and at last touched earth in a marsh near Summit, thirty miles from Oneonta. The descent had been noticed and Floyd was soon picked up and driven to Cobleskill, where he took a train for home.

George I. Wilber took full advantage of the situation and the next day Floyd, knife in hand, was Exhibit No. 1 on the Fair roof garden. Thousands of postcards bearing pictures of the boy and the balloon were sold.

The impromptu trip did not end Wallace's aerial exploits. The parachutist broke his leg and the youngster finished the season in his place. Later he became an aviator and operated his own plane for some time.

Floyd Wallace was for many years a skilled telephone repair man and a highly respected citizen of Oneonta. He died late in 1963.

## OUR ROUGH BEGINNINGS

The young woman stood in the cabin door and watched the sun go down behind the hills across the Susquehanna. Her thoughts were long ones but they did not concern the grinding work which was her daily portion nor the hardship and privation which she endured. Instead, her mind was on the future which she and her husband were creating for their children as yet unborn.

The time was 1790. The man had left his farm in Massachusetts the year before to build a new home in what were to be known as the "Otsego lands" on the western frontier. He had gone down the river with Clinton's army in 1779 and had liked the appearance of the land hereabouts. When the war was over he had purchased one hundred acres of land on what is now Southside from Goldsborough Banyar, the holder of the patent.

Early in 1789 he had come in on horseback over the trail which was to become the Catskill Turnpike, bringing little with him except rifle and axe. The spring and summer were spent making a clearing in the dense forest, building a log cabin and rude stable and planting meagre crops of corn and vegetables. Before snow fell he had gone back to Massachusetts and had returned the following spring with his bride.

The wagon in which the return trip was made had room for only a few tools and articles of household use. A plow, flax and wool wheels, a hand loom, a chest of drawers and some pots and pans were about all they could bring.

The house was made of logs chinked with clay, with a roof of bark and rushes held in place by poles. A stone fireplace with a chimney of sticks and clay heated the single room and the loft above and was used for cooking. The woman's laundry was a flat rock on the bank of the nearby brook and her cleansing agent was soft soap made of scraps of animal fat and lye obtained by leaching hardwood ashes.

The cabin floor was of packed earth; greased paper instead of glass filled the windows. The simple furniture had been handmade on the spot. Woven cord served as bedsprings and the homespun tick was filled with corn husks. Hand dipped tallow candles furnished illumination at night.

The food supply was ample but the viands were far from fancy. There was an abundance of meat, what with venison, bear, wild pigeons, trout and shad. The man had planted some maize and had made a small vegetable garden the year before. The corn made a coarse flour when ground with a stone pestle in a wooden mortar. There were wild berries and fruits, and sugar maples grew on every hand. Sassafras tea made a satisfactory beverage.

There were few neighbors but the pioneer and his wife were too busy to be lonely. Peter Swart lived up what is now known as Swart Hollow and over on the flat near the lower Neahwa Park entrance stood the log cabin of John Vanderwerker with his gristmill standing nearby on the river bank. Near the site of the viaduct was the log tavern of Aaron Brink while up the trail on the site of the United Presbyterian church was the log inn of Simeon Walling.

As we enjoy the comforts and pleasures of modern living we are prone to forget that those who made all of this possible lived lives of toil and danger and under conditions which we would regard today as intolerable.



## ONEONTA SPA

Oneonta once had visions of becoming another Richfield, Sharon or Clifton Springs but the beautiful dream died aborning. There were a lot of words spoken and written but nothing was done, which was probably just as well.

It all started back in 1871 when a new well in the village produced water of a high mineral content. We'll let the editor of the Otsego Democrat, an Oneonta weekly, tell about it:

"By invitation we visited on Sunday afternoon last, the new mineral well on the farm of Mr. Harvey Baker, near the roundhouse, in the lower part of this village, and found the water all that is claimed for it. Its medicinal qualities are beyond question, iron largely predominating."

Shortly thereafter mineral water was found on the premises of John Primmer on River Street. Visions of vast hotels and boarding houses, of thousands of people coming from afar to take advantage of the healing Oneonta waters, danced in the heads of business men.

And then more of the magic water was found in a new well in the barnyard of the big Hathaway House at the corner of Main and Prospect Streets. Mine host, Leonard Hathaway, thought he had it made. He already owned a hotel and now all he had to do was to inform the public that the drinking water in his hostelry would cure anything from dandruff to consumption.

The village might have gotten away with it, for the Age of Gullibility was in full swing. The newspaper announcing the discovery of the potent waters was full of ads of patent medicines guaranteed to cure every ailment to which human flesh is heir.

There was Miss Sawyer's Salve, for instance. Rub it on your eyelids and weak eyes would become strong; put it in your ears and deafness would vanish. Spread it on your stomach and away with indigestion. Cancer and rheumatism, toothache and baldness — all would succumb to this wonder-working ointment.

And then there was Dr. E. R. Clarke's Sherry Wine Bitters, "the Best Medicine in the world". Proclaimed the ad: "This remedy has been endorsed by the Massachusetts Charitable Association", so it had to be good.

Maybe Oneonta could have become a famous spa. One who thought so was the editor of the Ovid Bee who, after visiting the village, said in his paper: "Oneonta has a mineral spring just discovered which may be turned to as good an account, if the people there will it, as those of any other locality, we care not where."

However, the good burghers were too busy to dally long with the idea. Oneonta had more than doubled in size since the railroad came in 1865 and was now a thriving community of sixteen hundred souls. The shops were being built, plow and cultivator factories were going full blast, new streets were being opened and houses were going up on every hand.

What happened to the wondrous wells is not a matter of record. Maybe they dried up or perhaps the sewer system is now receiving their medicinal waters. Who knows, and for that matter who cares?

## BOYHOOD PLEASURES

The boy of fifty or sixty years ago didn't start being good until after the first of December. In early November the thought of Christmas was far from his mind. Thanksgiving and the trip to grandpa's lay in between and he wasn't going to start buttering up the folks until that was out of the way.

The first frost and the consequent donning of woolen longies at mother's insistence made him think of the pleasures ahead during the long winter. There would be skating and skiing, sledding and snowballing, as well as birthday parties and magic lantern shows.

A rather horrible thought was that of dancing school each Friday afternoon on the top floor of the Exchange block on Dietz Street back of the hotel. Professor Walter Wood was the man who taught you the waltz and the two step, the schottische, the quadrille, the lanciers and the Virginia reel.

The prof was a stickler for the niceties of ballroom behavior. There was none of this "Hi girl, wanta whirl?" approach to your prospective partner. You bowed from the waist and muttered: "Miss Jones, may I have the pleasure of this dance?"

After a few turns around the room, during which you kept your distance, you returned her to her seat, bowed again and told her how exquisitely delightful the past few minutes had been. You had been trained in truthfulness but there were times when a little white lie had to be told.

You either wore white gloves or carried a handkerchief in the right hand to protect the girl's dress against your sweaty little paw. Today such a precaution would be hardly necessary in view of the nature of the ball gowns the young ladies almost have on.

But let's get out of this stuffy atmosphere and into the fresh air. Sledding was a great sport for kids in the first decade or so of the new century. A Flexible Flyer or some other type of sled was necessary equipment for winter living. There were lots of hilly streets in the village and in that horse and buggy era traffic was no problem. When you got a little older there was the incomparable fun of riding the big bobs down Elm Street or Ford Avenue.

You got a kick out of hitching your sled to the rear of one of the low delivery sleighs used by butchers and grocers and taking a long ride around town. If the driver objected, you got out of there fast since those horse whips were long and keen of lash.

Store skis were a rarity, most kids making their own in the Normal manual training shop or at home with their father's help. Only a toe strap held the ski on and if you fell and lost one, you spent a lot of time chasing the thing through the countryside.

There was skating on the Normal reservoir and on Electric Lake above the East End power plant. Skates fastened to shoes were unknown. The variety used then had clamps which tightened against the sides of the heel and sole by means of a key or lever. The skates had a miserable habit of parting company with your shoe, taking with them a heel lift or part of the sole.

## LET'S PLAY SOME MORE

Let's stay out of doors a little longer as we continue the discussion of the joys of winter living for the boys and girls of a half century ago.

The jolly jumper (perhaps other generations called it by a different name) was a cheap and easily made device for sliding down hill. It consisted of a barrel stave on which was affixed a braced post with a seat on top. It took a little practice to ride the thing gracefully but a lot of kids had a lot of fun with it.

Boys and girls have engaged in snowball fights for countless years. Normally the snowball is pretty harmless but when dipped in water and allowed to freeze it can become a lethal weapon. Of course the Walnut Streeters had to have a refuge from the Reynolds Avenue and Cherry Street war parties so we used to build elaborate snow forts.

The forts had thick walls several feet high. Entrance was through a tunnel. The forts were complete with fire step and ammunition dump. Once in the safety of the castle we could shout defiance at the raiders. Occasionally we would be caught with our fort down and then carnage would result.

The days had a habit of running into long evenings. What did the kids do after supper (that was the night meal; you ate dinner at midday)? If you had homework, you did that first and make no mistake about it. However, we don't remember having much homework back in our grammar school days.

There were such games to play as checkers and parchesi, as well as card games like Lotto, Old Maid and Authors. Maybe you got out your paper soldiers and re-enacted the Revolution, the Civil War or the Russo-Japanese conflict.

About every boy had a small steam engine with an alcohol lamp supplying the heat. A little later small electric motors run by dry batteries were all the rage. And still later came the gyroscope and that was the height of scientific progress.

There were toy trains with spring driven locomotives. One boy in the block had an elaborate outfit in the attic with station, tunnel, switches and various types of cars. The town was very railroad conscious in those days and the kids spent a lot of time playing with their trains.

And then there were books and magazines to read. St. Nicholas, American Boy and Youth's Companion were the periodicals available to the boys of our generation and what marvelous reading they contained!

The children of those times could not draw on the great variety of books now on the market but the stories they had were solid and substantial and you read them over and over. There were such classics as Hans Brinker, Little Lord Fauntleroy, Little Lame Prince, Black Beauty, Robinson Crusoe and Swiss Family Robinson, as well as the fairy tales of Grimm and Anderson.

Ralph Henry Barbour wrote sport stories that we doubt can be surpassed today. There were Horatio Alger and Oliver Optic, the moralists, as well as Edward Eggleston and G. A. Henty's long list of books about England's wars.



## SIDNEY'S GENESIS

It was a long journey on foot from Cherry Valley to what is now Sidney but on May 22, 1772, the Rev. William Johnston, accompanied by his son Witter, an Indian guide and a cow, reached his destination and became the first white settler in the region. He induced other families to follow him and soon there was a flourishing little community known as Johnston's Settlement.

The small village was located below the present Sidney about opposite where the Unadilla River flows into the Susquehanna. It was on the site of an Indian fort which David Cusick claims, in his history of the Six Nations, to have been erected a thousand years before Columbus discovered America.

Proof of this antiquity is missing but it is certain that the redskin dwelt there for many hundreds of years. In the vicinity have been found artifacts representing every known Indian civilization from that of the nomad of Asiatic origin to that of the Iroquois in historic times.

The name Unadilla was originally applied not only to the Unadilla side of the two rivers but to lands across them now included in the towns of Sidney and Bainbridge.

In 1777 Joseph Brant, the noted Mohawk chief who had thrown in his lot with the British, drove the patriots from the village, burned their homes and made the place his headquarters. It was here that he held the famous flag of truce conference with General Nicholas Herkimer, who tried in vain to persuade him to switch his allegiance to the cause of the colonists.

In 1788 Colonel William Butler led a regiment against Old Unadilla and, finding Brant and his warriors absent, burned the homes of the Tories who had come in after the patriots had withdrawn. Under date of October 10, 1778, Butler wrote that "On this day we burned all the houses in the Unadilla settlement on the south side of the Susquehanna except Gladford's."

After the Revolution many of the former residents returned and a new settlement was made on the site of the present village. This was known first as Sidney Plains and later as just plain Sidney. The name was that of an English naval officer whose connection with the place remains obscure.

Thus did one of the most enterprising communities in the valley have its origin. The history of the village followed that of most places of its kind until the advent of the Scintilla Magneto Company.

Scintilla was incorporated in New York City in 1921 to market magnetos of Swiss manufacture. In 1925 manufacturing operations were started in Sidney in a wooden building once used by the Cortland Cart and Carriage Company. After the automobile killed the demand for horse drawn conveyances, the factory was used for the manufacture of the Hatfield motor car.

The company had a steady but slow growth until World War II skyrocketed the demand for airplane magnetos. By then the company had become part of the Bendix Aviation Corporation. Thousands were added to the payroll and the physical plant was greatly expanded.

Scintilla now makes a wide range of products and is a thriving industry in a thriving community.

## HOLIDAY FUN

Let's take another excursion back into a boy's world of half a century ago, this time not to recall the everyday incidents of a summer's pleasure but to point up some of the highlights which afforded the triple joys of anticipation, realization and recollection.

In those years which seem like only yesterday, holidays had more meaning than they do in the fast moving world of today. Memorial Day, for instance, had not yet lost for the public the significance for which it was originated.

For kids, who could not yet grasp its full meaning, it was a good day. There would be a parade of course. Howard's Band would be followed by Company G in gaudy blue uniforms liberally frogged in white and topped by a spiked helmet.

Then would come the Spanish-American War veterans, most of them in the prime of life. The members of the Grand Army of the Republic, about as old at that time as World War I veterans are today, would turn out almost to a man to honor their Civil War comrades who had died for the Flag.

The next big occasion was the Glorious Fourth of July, which was seventh heaven for kids. Preparations would start weeks in advance. One's allowance had to be carefully budgeted and the old man buttered up since extra funds were inevitably needed. You just couldn't save enough from your allowance of ten cents or a quarter a week.

You had to have many packages of regular firecrackers and several strings of the small Chinese variety. And then there must be an adequate stock of yellow Thunderbolts, several giant crackers and a number of sticks of punk for ignition purposes. A few of those little cones out of which a snake crawled when they were lighted were a necessity. You also needed dynamite caps for your cane and several rolls of ammunition for your repeating cap pistol.

At last the big day dawned and you were out of the house as soon as the law (your mother) would allow and you had a bang up time every minute of the day until your last cracker was fired.

In the afternoon there was generally a firemen's parade followed by a patriotic rally at which the lion roared and the eagle screamed. With evening came the neighborhood fireworks, complete with Roman candles, sky rockets, sparklers and pinwheels.

After that maybe your dad would take you down to watch the fun around the fire station. The firemen would put dynamite caps on the trolley tracks and there would be a continuous roar as the cars came down the street. Once they used a railroad torpedo which lifted the single truck of the small trolley right off the track.

Upon another occasion a large rocket was fired down the tracks. Lacking a guidance system, the rocket failed to negotiate the Chestnut Street curve and took off into the wild blue yonder.

We are not advocating a return to that type of good old day. A kid was lucky if he didn't get burned at least once and for some children the day would result in serious injury. It was fun but rather foolish fun.

## HUNTINGTON THE COLLECTOR

Both of Solon Huntington's sons were collectors. Henry assembled money and then the rare paintings and books which it could buy; Willard gathered memories and recollections, historical facts and folk lore of the region of his boyhood. Both loved Oneonta, the place of their birth.

We have previously told the story of Henry E. Huntington, fabulously rich railroad baron, developer of Los Angeles, possessor of one of the world's greatest collections of art, and donor of our own Huntington Memorial Library and Park.

This sketch concerns Willard, a man little known to the general public but one who left a priceless legacy of fact and fable concerning the history and customs of Central New York from earliest days to the Civil War period.

Willard Vincent Huntington was born July 26, 1856, in the old Huntington homestead on the site of the Library. His father was Solon Huntington, brother of Collis P. Huntington, and his mother Harriet Saunders, daughter of Dr. Henry Saunders of Burnt Hills.

He received his early education in Delilah Sullivan's select school on Dietz Street where the Drs. Pondolfino now have their offices. He later attended the village's second school, on Grove Street opposite the church.

In 1870 he entered a school for boys conducted by Dr. Joseph Fitch at Norwalk, Conn., and spent three years there. In 1877 he went to California and became associated with his uncle, Collis P. Huntington, the famous railroad builder and industrialist.

Executive work did not appeal to him, however, and in 1890 he turned to his true love, historical research and writing. In 1891 he published privately a volume entitled "Oneonta Memories, and Sundry Personal Recollections." This fascinating story of the Oneonta of yore has long been out of print but there is a copy in the Library and there are a few privately owned in the city.

Willard Huntington spent the next twenty-five years collecting material and writing a book on the history, manners and customs of Central New York. He traveled throughout the section, interviewing old residents and collecting documentary evidence. He intended to publish the work in several volumes but his untimely death intervened.

He was killed on September 27, 1915, in an automobile accident near Otego. The funeral was held at Colliscroft, then owned by his first cousin, Mrs. Edward D. Lewis, and the body was shipped to California for burial beside his wife.

For years the whereabouts of the manuscript was a mystery. In 1951 Dr. Edward Parish, president of the Upper Susquehanna Historical Society, located it in the Huntington Library at San Marino, Calif., and secured permission to bring it to Oneonta. The Society had its 6,000 hand written pages typed into 2,426 pages contained in twelve notebooks.

The manuscript contains much material about Oneonta from primitive times until about 1860, but the items are hard to locate since the arrangement is chronological instead of regional and there is no index.

Your author hopes that some day he may be able to undertake the formidable task of cross indexing the manuscript so that the facts may be readily accessible.



## THE GENUINE ARTICLE

It is quite possible that there are people in Oneonta who never have tasted real, honest to goodness maple syrup although all around us is produced a variety that is unsurpassed in all the world.

If you eat your pancakes or waffles in a restaurant, the chances are that the syrup you use will contain no maple at all but will consist of corn syrup artificially flavored and colored. The Vermont Maid, Log Cabin and other syrups sold in food markets contain only about fifteen per cent of the real article. Price is the big reason, for you'll have to pay about \$5.50 a gallon for one hundred per cent maple syrup. However, those who use it will tell you that it's worth the cost.

The making of maple sugar and syrup has been a by-product of farming hereabouts since the earliest days. White sugar was scarce in times gone by and our ancestors used maple sugar for sweetening, as did the Indians before them.

Let's see how maple syrup was made on a Delaware County farm fifty years or more ago.

The season would generally start during the first fortnight in March. The initial step was the tapping of the sugar maple trees. The farmer would drill a hole with a bit and brace, insert a spigot and hang a tin bucket on it, all the time hoping that the ensuing nights would be cold and the days warm.

The sap bush of about a thousand trees was on the back end of the farm. When the buckets were full they were emptied into a large vat on a sled, which was drawn to the saphouse. Here were large shallow pans where the sap was boiled over a hot wood fire. It took thirty-five gallons of sap to make a gallon of syrup.

When the liquid reached the proper consistency it was drawn off and taken to the farmhouse where another evaporation process took place, this time in large iron kettles on the kitchen stove. Milk was added and as this boiled to the top it carried with it impurities in the sap. This froth was skimmed off.

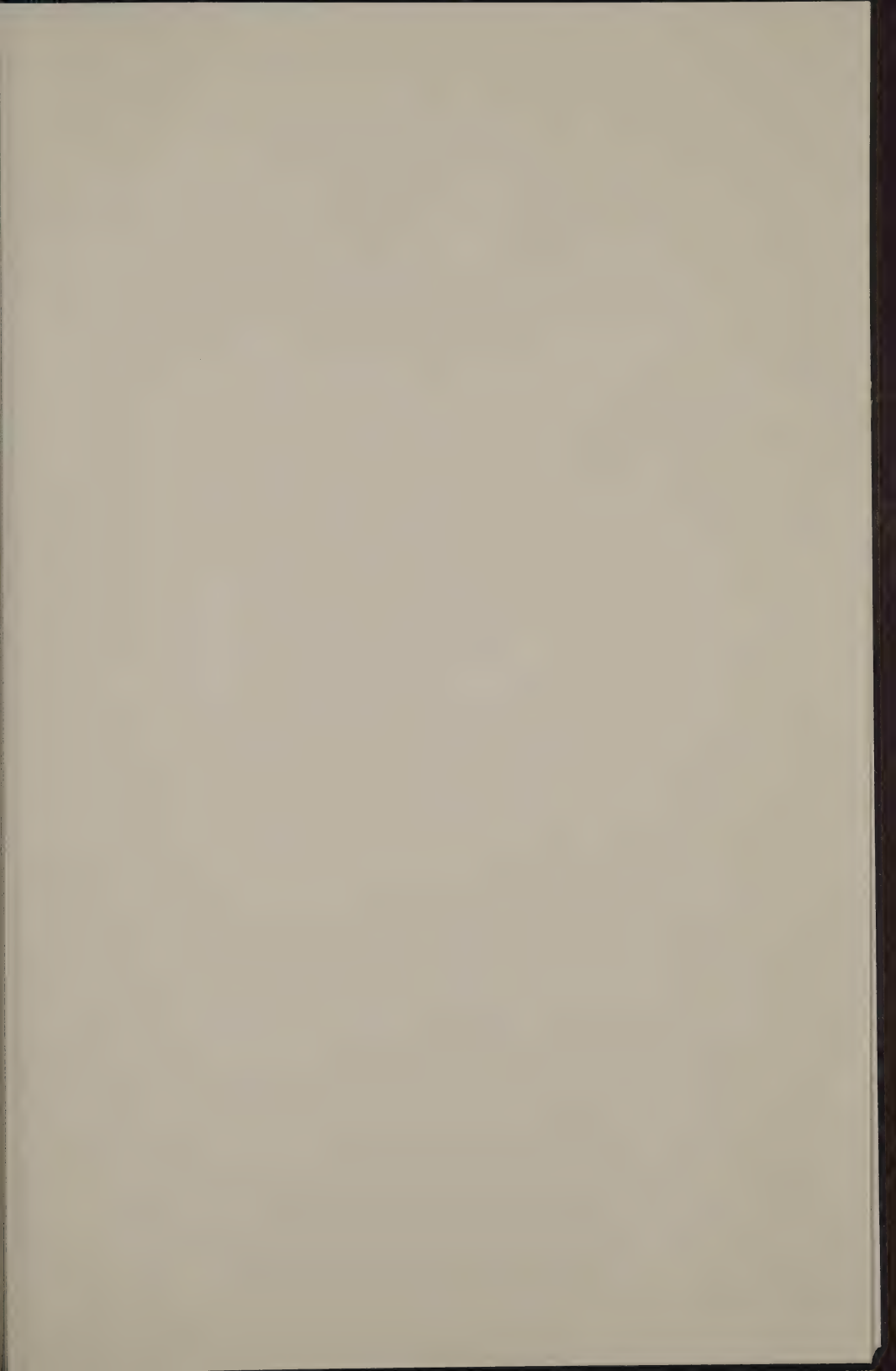
When the syrup attained a temperature of 219 degrees F. it was taken off the stove, allowed to cool and then strained through close knit cloth into containers. If hard sugar was to be made the desired temperature was 236 degrees. The syrup was stirred until it began to grain and was then poured into molds. For soft sugar a temperature of about 229 degrees was reached.

Sugar making time was a great season for the young people. It was fun to ride the sled in from the sugar bush and then to sit in the warm but smoky and steaming saphouse and watch proceedings. Maybe you would be allowed to boil eggs in the sap and what a sweet delicacy resulted!

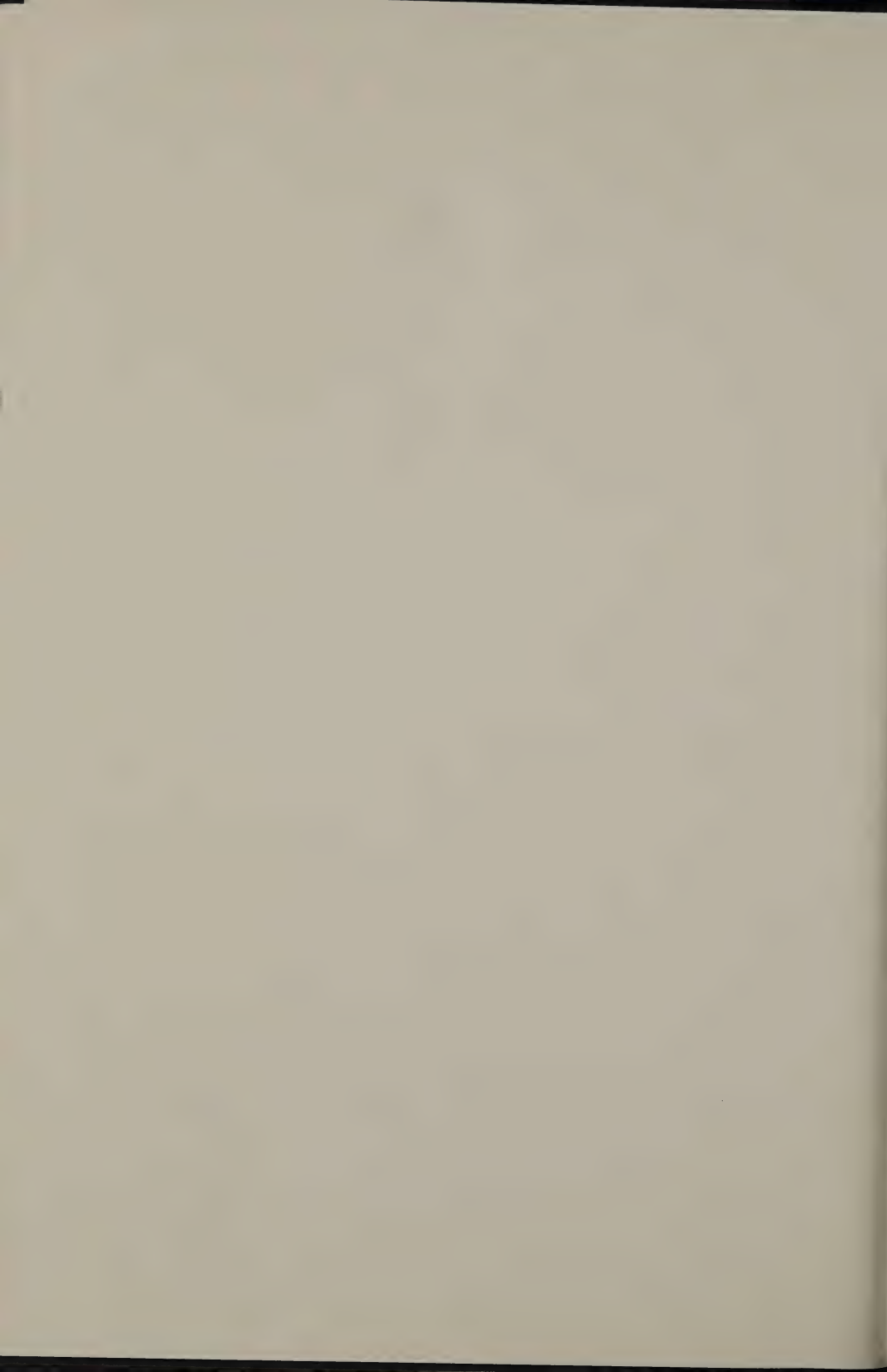
It was fun to stir a dish of syrup until it became sugar. The longer you stirred the more closely textured and the whiter it became. Perhaps you poured hot syrup into a pan of fresh snow to make jack wax, another taste delight. And then the sugar itself was delicious.

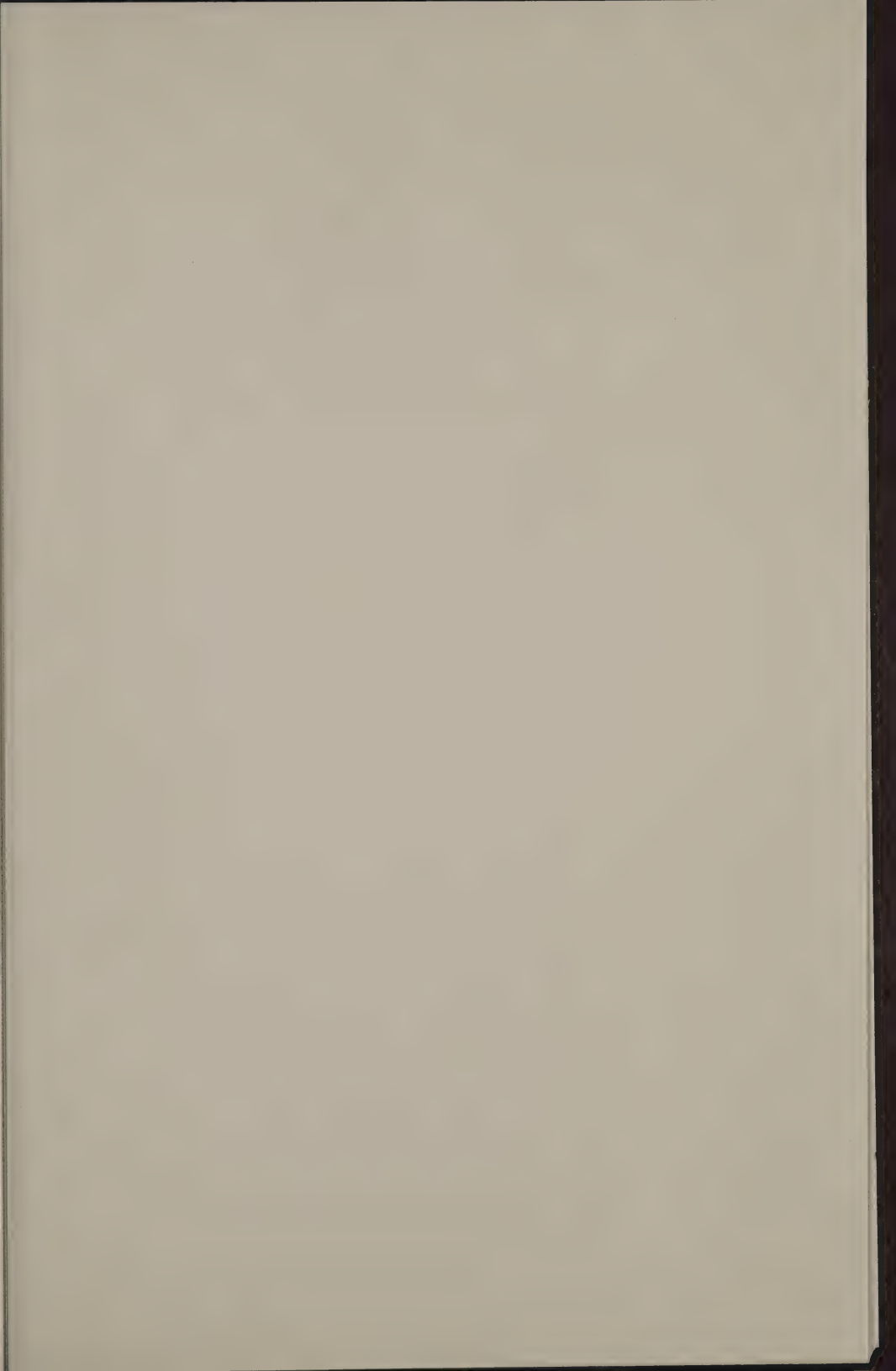
Essentially the same process is used today but with many refinements. The entire job is now done in the saphouse. The end product, however, is the same as it was one hundred and fifty years ago — wonderfully tasting pure maple syrup and sugar.





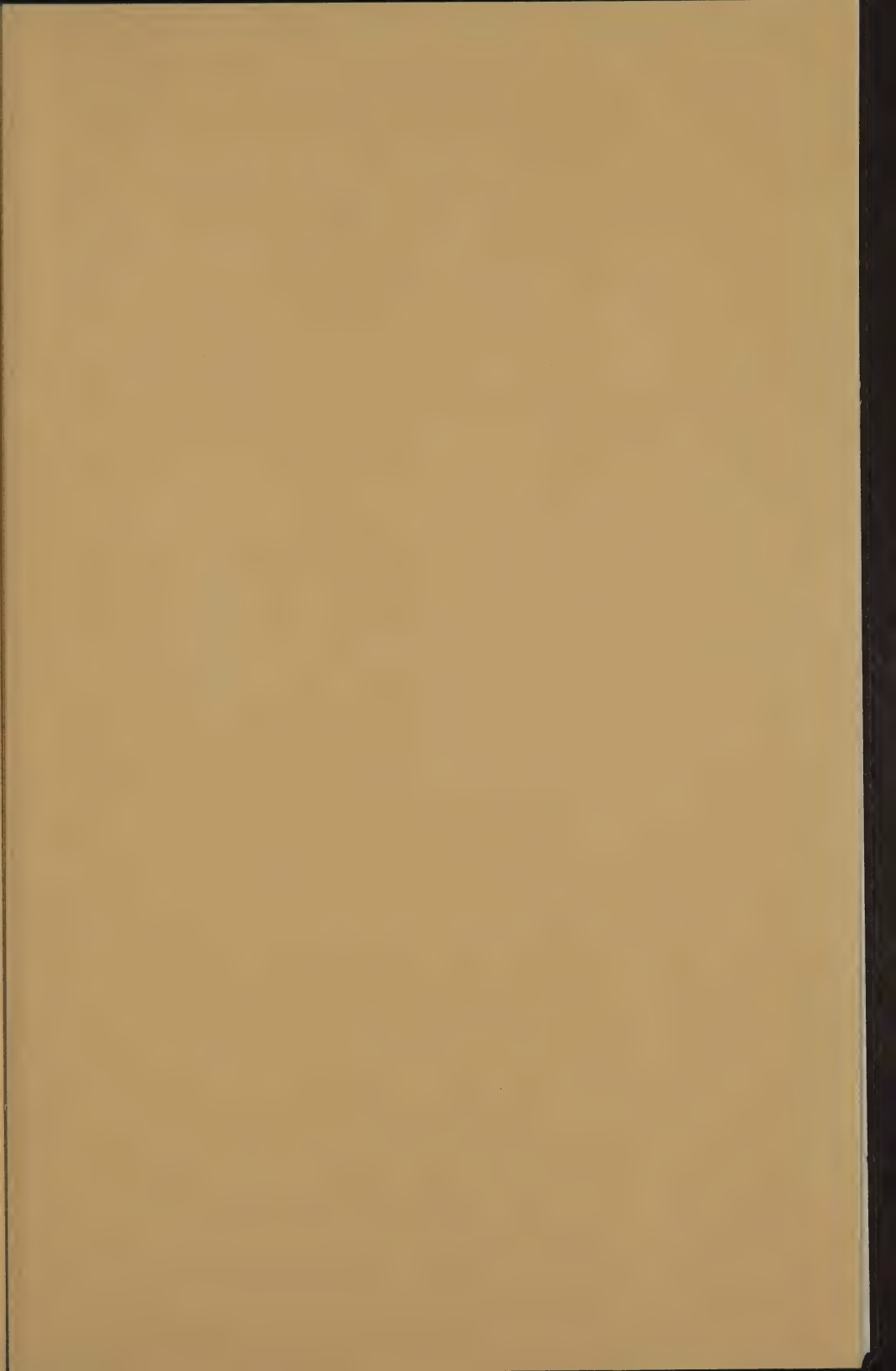


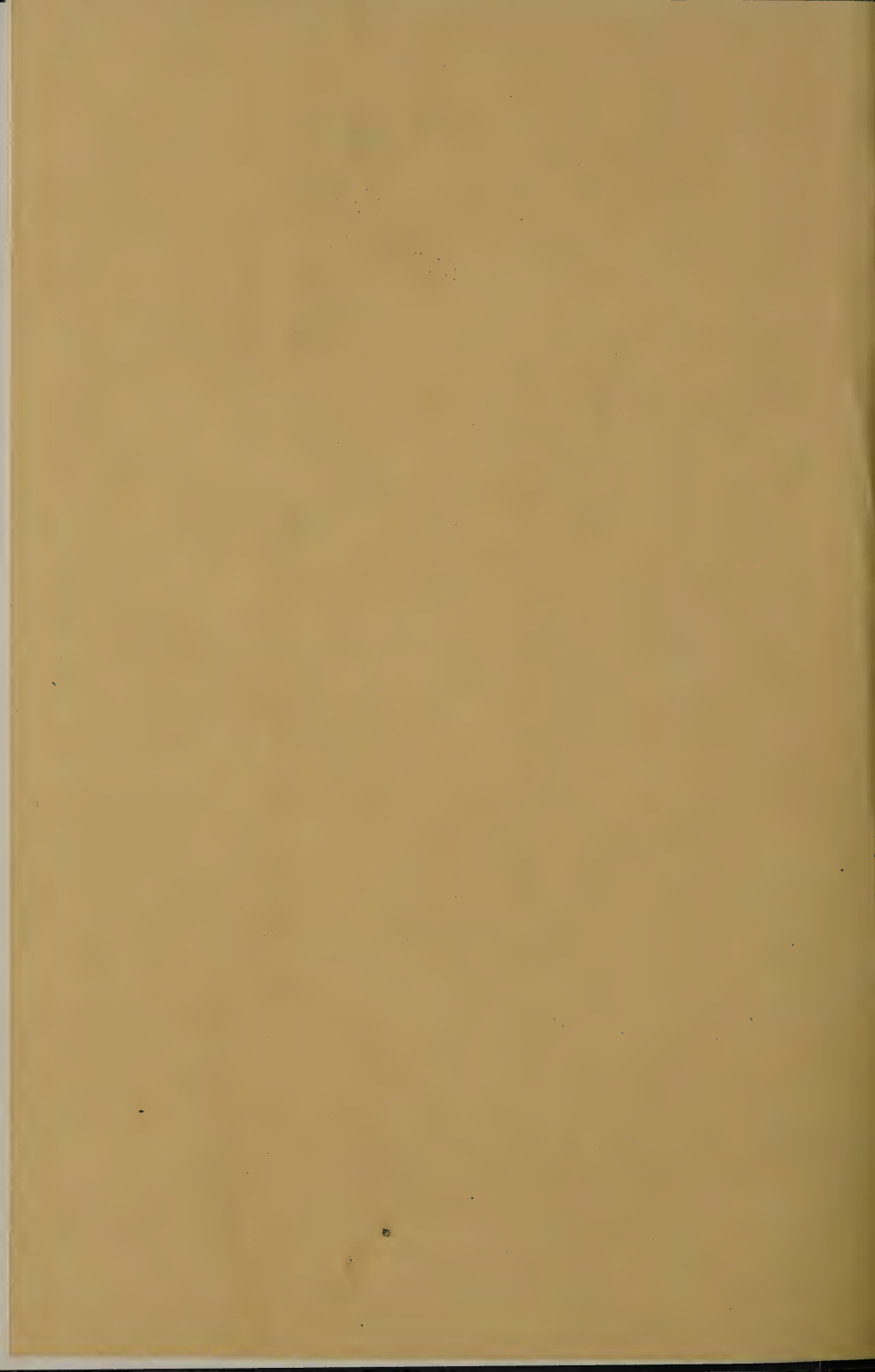




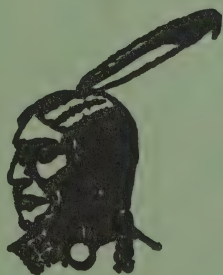








# In Old Oneonta



VOL. 4, 1965

EDWIN R. MOORE





Edwin R. More









# IN OLD ONEONTA

BY

Edwin R. Moore

VOLUME FOUR

PUBLISHED BY

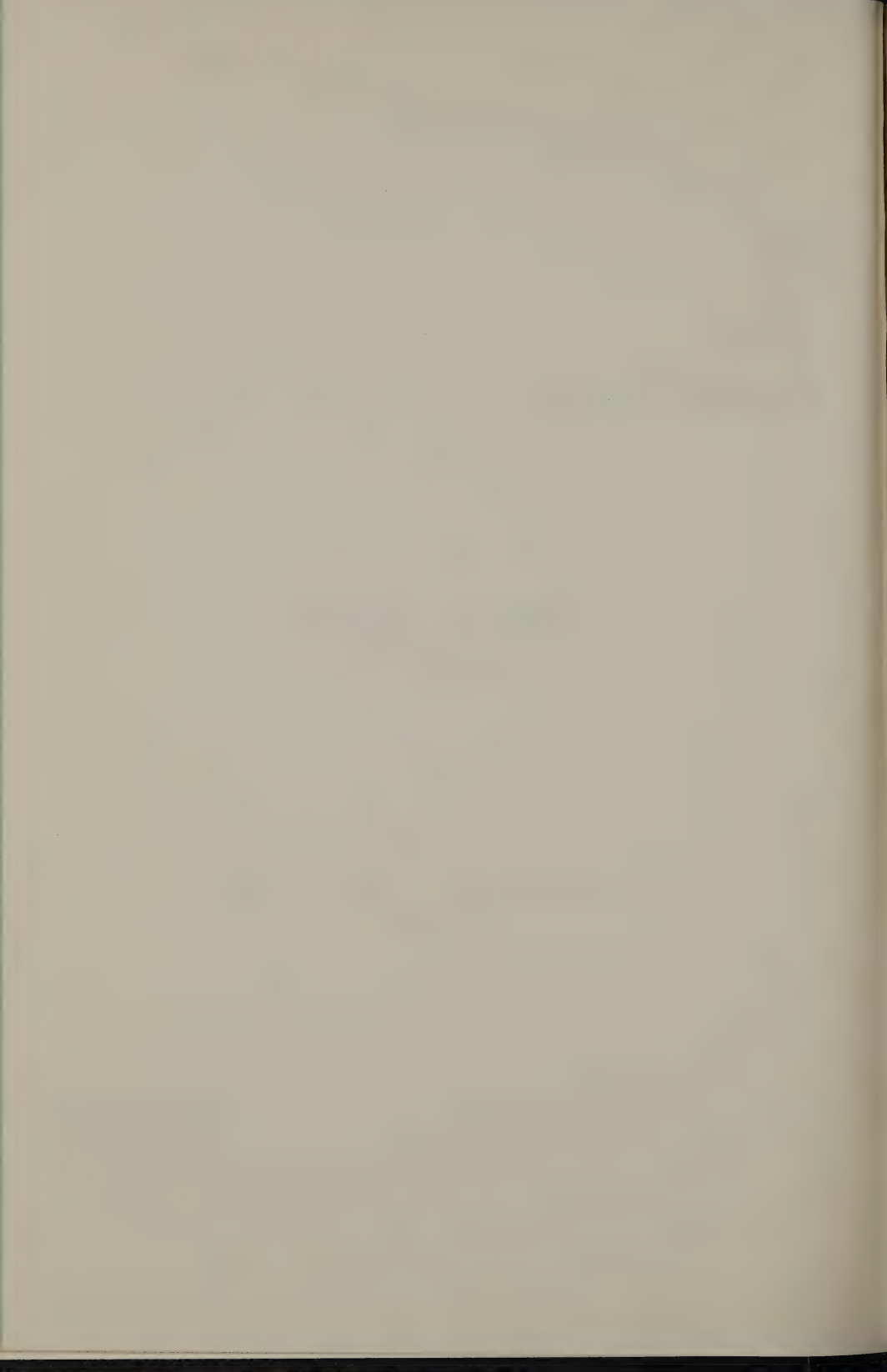
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## FOREWORD

This fourth volume of IN OLD ONEONTA is dedicated to the memory of Walter A. Bliss, who loved Oneonta and its surroundings as much as I do. A native Oneontan, whose ancestors included the first settler in the West Street valley, Walt Bliss was never happier than when discussing the area and its colorful history. For his help, his encouragement and his friendship I shall ever be grateful.





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## SOB SISTER DOTTIE

It was nearly midnight when Dorothy Kilgallen walked into the Western Union office in Oneonta, sat down at a typewriter and began to pound out her story. "Cooperstown, N. Y., June 28, 1935," she wrote. "I kept the death watch with Harry Nabinger last night as he waited for Eva Coo, the woman who loved him, to go to the electric chair."

Miss Kilgallen, who was a crack reporter for the New York Journal-American before she went columnist, was one of the "sob sisters" who covered the sensational trial of the notorious innkeeper for the murder on Crumhorn Mountain of her handyman, Harry Wright. She had been assigned by her paper to get the reaction of Eva's former cronies as the "sybil of the hills" walked the "last mile" to her rendezvous with death at Sing Sing.

Accompanied by Roy Howard, a Journal photographer, Dot Kilgallen drove to Oneonta on the day of the execution and inquired as to where Eva's friends might be found that night. She was particularly interested in Harry Nabinger, who had lived off the woman's bounty and was supposed to be her lover but who had testified against her.

Miss Kilgallen was told that a likely place was George Noble's roadhouse at the top of Colliers hill where the Evening Inn now stands. As she and Howard approached the place they could see the blood-red neon sign reading "NOBLE'S INN . . . BEER ON DRAUGHT." As they parked the car the slender young girl and her companion could hear the tinny sound of a mechanical piano above the murmur of voices. Apparently the place was crowded.

As they shouldered their way through the room, Dorothy and Ray saw several people whom they remembered from the trial. From what conversation they could hear, it appeared that Eva's fast approaching doom was being discussed by about everyone.

Talking at the bar was a man whom they recognized as one who had sold small wooden mallets around Cooperstown. They recalled that his pitch was something like this: "Only a quarter, folks . . . Made out of wood from the haunted house on Crumhorn Mountain . . . Buy a mallet like the one Eva Coo used in the murder of Gimpy Wright."

Dorothy recalled the night she spent in the "haunted house" to get atmosphere for her stories. There were other women reporters at the county seat but she was the one who thought of spending a night on murder mountain and her story of the experience was sensational.

Finally she talked with Nabinger. He was deep in his cups and at first did not recognize her but when he did, he opened up and she got what she had come for—his reactions as Eva's hour drew near. He swore that he had never loved the woman but said that he was sorry about her plight and that he was bitter against the press, which he claimed had made a Roman holiday of the trial.

The reporter kept eyeing the clock as its hands crept closer to ten o'clock. Death and the State were on daylight saving time and it was nearly eleven in the Big House. Soon the condemned woman would start her journey down the corridor.

The place became hushed as ten o'clock came. Dorothy found a phone booth and telephoned her office. There was utter silence when she came back and announced: "Eva is gone. She was game to the last."

The mood soon passed and Noble's was loud with conversation again as Dorothy Kilgallen headed for Oneonta to file the last story she would ever write about one of the great murder cases of the century.



## A GHOST TOWN

It is truly a ghost town although ten families dwell there. Gone, however, is nearly everything which once made Otsdawa a bustling, thriving community tucked away in the hills which bound the Susquehanna valley on the north, between Oneonta and Otego.

The Baptist church, tidy and attractive, still stands but long gone are the post-office, the stores, the school and the other adjuncts of a country hamlet. The high dam across the east branch of Otsdawa creek is still intact with the mill pond behind it but only the rotting penstock and flume remain of the busy woodworking mill which once stood there.

King Hathaway and a brother were the first settlers in the Otsdawa east branch area, coming into the region in 1778, probably from Connecticut. Other early settlers were Captain James French, Casper and Conrad Overhiser, Deacon Green, John Lamb, Phineas Cook, John Taylor and Samuel Hyatt. Several of these men had been Revolutionary soldiers.

The Otsdawa area reached its greatest development just prior to the Civil War. Perhaps forty families lived in the hamlet and scores of productive farms dotted the small valleys and the surrounding hills. There are still good farms along the Otsdawa but they lie mainly in the creek bottoms. The hill farms, which were generally the first to be settled, are now largely abandoned, with only foundation walls marking where once were houses and barns and with the lush fields and meadows of yore now overgrown with brush and second growth timber.

The other day we toured the east branch area with attorney Robert Hathaway, a direct descendant of the pioneers of that name. He and the estate of his father, Lynn W. Hathaway, still own several hundred acres of land in the region. Driving over roads which are now only wide paths through the forest, we came to the site of the old Hathaway homestead, on a hill which is one of the highest points in Otsego County.

Here is Bob's hideaway, a rough but comfortable camp built near the foundation of the old house and barn. As we sat on the porch in the gathering dusk we could see before us acres of pine plantation, second growth maple and birch and abundant brush. Here in the old days stretched tilled fields and rolling pastures.

This situation can be duplicated almost anywhere in the Otsego hills. In 1830 the county had a population of 51,372. The 1960 census shows a count of 51,942, an increase in 130 years of only 570 persons and we have a feeling that the students in the two Oneonta colleges more than account for this. In all probability the permanent population of the county is less than it was a century and a quarter ago.

In 1830 Oneonta village comprised only one hundred and fifty souls while today we have more than twenty-five per cent of all the people in the country. It follows that the small communities are less populous than they once were and that thousands of people have left the farms.

The next time you want a pleasure drive, load the family into your oldest car and travel the hill roads. You will have a lot of fun and will see much that will furnish food for thought.

## HE WAS INCORRUPTIBLE

"Herrick, those bags my men are carrying contain just a million bucks in old bills. Get out of the country, or work it any way you want to, but agree now not to testify against me and the money is yours."

It is not on record what reply Chauncey L. Herrick, chief field agent in the Chicago district for the Internal Revenue Service, made to Al Capone and his thugs but it must have been of a negative character for the former Oneonta did testify at the trial of the vice overlord for income tax evasion and his evidence helped send Capone to prison in 1931.

This was but one incident in the colorful career of a man once active in Oneonta affairs. Cigarmaker, plumber, prominent Mason, soldier and national commander of the United Spanish-American War Veterans, Chan Herrick topped off his varied career with a brilliant record in federal service.

Chauncey Herrick was born in Laurens in 1876 and moved to Oneonta ten years later with his parents, Elman and Alice Herrick. He learned the trade of cigarmaker and worked at it for awhile in North Tonawanda, later operating a cigar factory in East Syracuse with Henry Peck, also an Oneontan.

He returned to Oneonta in about 1906 and, with Clarence Miller, formed the plumbing and heating firm of Miller and Herrick. Following the dissolution of that company he was in the laundry business for some time and then, in 1914, he entered the United States Internal Revenue Service as a special agent.

While stationed in Buffalo he was sent to Sodus Bay to investigate a suspected wine smuggling operation. He broke the case and the government was some \$200,000 richer by reason of the fines and penalties assessed.

The Federal government was not satisfied that the wine growers of California were paying the amount of income tax which their apparent prosperity indicated was due and Herrick was dispatched there to investigate. He uncovered evidence of chicanery and as a result of his disclosures a couple of million dollars flowed into the Federal treasury.

Herrick became one of the best of the special agents in the Internal Revenue Bureau. He checked the extensive land manipulations in Florida and did valuable work in Washington and in other offices of the service. In the late 1920s he was appointed head of the field office in Chicago and did considerable work on the Capone case, the bribe attempt resulting from his activities in that direction.

Chan Herrick was active in Masonry, being master of Oneonta Lodge in 1913 and district deputy grand master the following year. He belonged to all of the affiliated Masonic bodies and was an early member of Oneonta Lodge of Elks.

At the outset of the Spanish-American War he enlisted in the local Company G, 1st New York Volunteer Infantry, and served with the outfit in Hawaii. Upon his return he helped to organize Colonel Walter Scott Post, United Spanish-American War Veterans. He served as its commander and later as head of the state organization. In 1924 he became national commander-in-chief of the order.

Chauncey W. Herrick died in San Francisco in 1937 and was buried in Greenwood Cemetery, Oneonta. A bronze plaque was placed on his grave by the United Spanish-American War Veterans, many state and national officers coming to Oneonta for the ceremony of dedication.

## DAYS OF THE QUAKERS

Back in the days when members of the Society of Friends addressed each other as "Thee" and "Thou" there was considerable Quaker influence in Otsego County. There were once several active churches of the sect and well attended meetings were held until near the end of the nineteenth century.

The first Quaker of record to settle in the county was Joseph Sleeper, a preacher as well as a miller, surveyor, carpenter, millwright and blacksmith. He came into the Otego Creek valley from Mount Holley, N. J., in 1774 and built a log cabin and grist and sawmills near the site of the Laurens Central School.

It was his intention to plant a Quaker colony around his mills and he did bring a few members of the sect into the area but his plans were interrupted by the Revolution. In 1779 a band of Senecas burned the house and mills and forced the family to flee. Sleeper returned after the war and rebuilt his home and the mills, which he sold to Griffin Crafts in 1794.

In 1775 Joseph Sleeper deeded to the Society of Friends the land which is now the Quaker Cemetery, just outside Laurens on the back road to West Oneonta. A meeting house was built there but we have no record of how long it was in use. The persons buried in the cemetery, including eight Revolutionary soldiers, were presumably all Quakers.

Calvin Strait, a Quaker preacher, settled north of Laurens in 1800 and that same year Moses Powell, a member of the Society, came from Greene County and bought the Joseph Mayall farm, first in the vicinity, near Mt. Vision. Other Friends in the vicinity were Paul Hoag and sons Isaac, Andrew and Abraham; Isaac Strait, Thomas Haight, Moses Hoag, Samuel Allen and Jeremiah Gardner.

There was a considerable Quaker settlement around Strait's Corners, now West Oneonta. In 1797 Nathaniel Niles came from Milne, Dutchess County, and bought a farm. He was a Quaker and soon others came in and settled on what is now Country Club Road but was then known as Quaker Street, and is still so called by older residents. Among the family names were Strait, Bull, Taber, Northrup, Culver, Francis and Holmes.

In the big Niles home, standing next to the West Oneonta Cemetery (in which there is a Quaker section) and once owned by Charles Taber, "First Day" services were held for years. Later, meetings were held in the nearby home of Niles' great-granddaughters, Elizabeth and Martha Bull. This is now the home of John R. Leahy.

In 1821 Allan Wickham, a Quaker, came from Albany County and settled on Crumhorn Mountain. He was soon followed by other Friends by the names of Hicks, Thorn, Yeomans, Estes, Gurney, Lester, Hart, Wilber, Haight and Townsend. The Society met in the log schoolhouse until 1826, when a church edifice was erected.

In 1827 a schism developed in Quakerdom. A new doctrine was introduced which divided the Society into two factions, each group refusing to commune with the other either in church or in private life. The dissension destroyed the Crumhorn Quaker colony and the church was soon abandoned. Evidently the members of the Society in the Otego Creek valley rode out the storm.

In 1933 a branch of the Society of Friends was organized in Oneonta. The small group still meets weekly in the Community House.



## THE KLAN MARCHES

As the long line of white robed marchers cleared the Municipal Building the fire alarm sounded, the call coming from the corner of Watkins Avenue and Fairview Street. The big trucks roared out into the street and the paraders scattered like chickens at the approach of a hawk.

When the trucks turned into Chestnut Street the lines reformed and the parade started again down Main Street. As it was passing over the viaduct the alarm rang out for the second time, the box pulled this time being at the corner of River Street and Wilcox Avenue. Again the marchers ran for the curbs but this time the parade did not reform, the men in their gaudy attire making their way on their own to Wilcox Flats where the Ku Klux Klan rally would be held.

The alarms were both false, the obvious intent of whoever pulled the levers being to break up the parade. Condemnation of the very dangerous act of putting in a false fire alarm was universal but nevertheless many people were amused and not a little pleased, for the KKK was not the most popular organization in this tolerant community.

An old resident with whom we were once discussing the Klan remarked that at one time it was a powerful organization in Oneonta. To our mind it was not at all potent and wielded no discernible influence. All it accomplished was to engender a little suspicion and hatred where none had existed before.

The Klan was originally organized in the South in 1866 by Confederate veterans, its purpose being to maintain order and safety during the difficult Reconstruction days. Lawless elements infiltrated it, however, and in 1869 the groups were ordered disbanded by the Klan head, General Nathan Bedford Forrest.

The KKK was revived in 1915 by a Georgia preacher and agitator, William J. Simmons. It grew rapidly in the tense days following World War I, serving as a repository for the postwar hatreds and fears of super-patriots, religious fundamentalists, irrational nativists, white supremacists and some well meaning but misguided citizens.

The movement reached Oneonta about 1924 and there was some Klan activity hereabouts for the next couple of years. We do not know how many Klansmen there were locally but we doubt if there were more than a few hundred. Occasionally a burning cross could be seen against the night sky on Franklin Mountain or Oyaron Hill but we can recall no threats, attempted intimidation or violence.

In June of 1925 a meeting of the Ku Klux Klan was held on the Plains and it was said that 150 were initiated. At about this time groups of Klansmen in full regalia attended Sunday services at the Elm Park and First Methodist churches. The minister who invited them to the latter institution was soon replaced.

The parade mentioned above was held in October of 1926 and was the last visible Klan activity around here. Most of the men in line were from out of the city.

The Ku Klux Klan never had more than a toehold in Oneonta and that was precarious. The movement was condemned by the American Legion and by the Masonic order and few persons of standing in the community belonged.

## THE SCOTS-IRISH

The earliest settlers in what is now Otsego County were largely of Palatine German and Scots-Irish stock. There were a few English, Dutch, Irish and Scots Highlanders of the Catholic faith but the bulk of the population prior to the Revolution was composed of Germans from the Mohawk and Schoharie valleys and of Scots who had fled English oppression in the north of Ireland.

The people of Cherry Valley, the first permanent settlement in the county, were predominantly Scots-Irish. This frontier community was the extreme outpost of white civilization in New York State when the Revolution began.

The Scots-Irish are a people whose influence upon American history has been great. In the 17th and early in the 18th century they were maintaining in the north of Ireland the stern faith of John Calvin. They were as attached to political freedom as they were to freedom of worship and the oppression of the English Crown finally became intolerable.

They concluded to emigrate to the New World. The westward movement started about 1710 and a decade later had reached large proportions. One authority says that "ships enough could not be found to carry from Ulster the men who were unwilling to live except in the air of religious freedom".

Within a period of two years thirty thousand made the trip. This influx continued for half a century, almost depopulating certain sections of Ulster. To that emigration America owed Henry Knox, John Stark, Anthony Wayne, John Sullivan and George, James and Dewitt Clinton. From this same stock were descended Patrick Henry, Daniel Boone, Andrew Jackson, James K. Polk and Horace Greeley.

In August of 1710 five shiploads of Scots-Irish landed in Boston and most of the party went to New Hampshire, making a settlement which they called Londonderry after the Irish town. From here came the men who settled Cherry Valley.

The first settler in that region was John Lindsay, who had obtained a patent of eighteen thousand acres in 1738. He came with his wife, his father-in-law and a few servants. Following him came a young clergyman named Samuel Dunlop and it was the latter who in 1741 induced several Scots-Irish families from Londonderry to locate on the Lindsay patent.

Hundreds of Scots-Irish came into Delaware County, especially the northern portion. They bore such names as Henderson and Hetherington, Haddon, Harper and Conner; Moscrip, More (Moore), Murdock and MacClintock. Their church at Doonan's Corners, where the East Meredith-Bloomville road crosses the old Catskill Turnpike, was one of the oldest west of the Hudson. The church edifice has long since been turned to other uses but the ancient cemetery can still be seen.

It is interesting to note that the term "Scots-Irish" is a comparatively recent label, virtually unknown in the time of the people to whom it is applied. Their forebears had crossed over to Ireland from Scotland at the time of the Plantation of Ulster but that had been a hundred years before and they considered themselves Irish and called themselves that although they were of the Protestant faith. But whether Irish or Scottish the breed was a good one that has made its influence felt in the region of the Upper Susquehanna.

## ADS OF THE PAST

Several times we have gone back to a particular day, or period, in the past and have told what was happening in Oneonta at the time. Let us vary the procedure and take a look at the newspaper advertisements of a bygone era—in particular, April 9, 1902.

The copy of the Oneonta Daily Star which we have before us is yellow with age and ready to fall apart at the touch of a finger but its advertising columns are filled with fascinating material and with names which evoke many memories.

As was characteristic of journals of the day, the front page contains several ads. Ralph W. Murdock told the public that patent leather shoes were absolutely necessary for formal occasions but that for business wear a man could get by with velour, Russia calf, vici kid or glazed kangaroo varieties.

C. C. Colburn was selling a fine line of men's suits at prices from \$10 to \$12.50. Quite a bargain you say, but remember that in 1902 a working man thought himself fortunate to have a job that would pay him \$1.00 for a day of ten hours. That \$10 suit represented one hundred hours of labor. You pay much less for your clothes today.

The Oneonta Department Store, F. H. Bresee, proprietor, was announcing a new delivery service in charge of J. B. Gardner. A wagon would call at your home periodically for your order, be it for groceries or other articles. The order would be filled promptly and delivered to your hired girl at the back door.

J. M. Goldsmith, whose store stood on Main at the foot of Grove, was selling trimmed hats from \$1.98 up and George Reynolds and Son, at the corner of Chestnut Street extension, had a fine line of 1902 wallpapers at three cents a roll.

If you were in need of living quarters and a modern six room flat would suffice, you could rent one for \$3.50 a month, but of course you would have to pay for your own gas lighting. If you wanted to buy a house, there were several advertised at from \$1,500 to \$3,000. The latter price was pretty high but the place was near both Main Street and the D.&H. shops and was on a big lot.

The Grand Hotel in New York at Broadway and 31st Street was advertising rooms from \$1.00 up. This luxurious hostelry was pretty far uptown but there was a bath on every floor and electric lights in every room.

Maybe you wanted to visit Aunt Minnie out in San Francisco. The Erie Railroad was offering tourist rate tickets, including a sleeper berth, from Binghamton for \$47. You could go on the Wabash for \$42.50 but there was no sleeper.

B. F. Sisson ("connected with both the Oneonta and Ives telephone lines") was offering ladies' and misses' man-tailored suits from \$10.50 to \$25. You had your choice of such materials as cheviot, Venetian, homespun, broadcloth or basket cloth. At Ronan Brothers the prices for these suits started at \$6.50 but they had only one phone, which might have accounted for the difference.

And patent medicines! For a small amount you could buy a remedy absolutely guaranteed to cure every known malady, from colic to consumption, from baldness to rheumatism. The ads didn't say so but you would get a bonus of a cheap drunk during the cure, for alcohol was the chief ingredient of most of the patent medicines of the period.



## MR. JUSTICE NELSON

If the opinion which Associate Justice Samuel Nelson wrote in the famous *Dred Scott* case had been the majority decision of the United States Supreme Court, it is possible that the Civil War might not have started when it did.

This is not to say that it would have averted war; it surely was much too late for that. Justice Nelson, the only Otsego County man ever to sit on the high court, had declared that the federal government had no jurisdiction in the matter. However, the majority decision declared the Missouri Compromise to be unconstitutional, thereby allowing the extension of slavery into the territories. The die was cast and conflict soon followed.

Samuel Nelson was born in 1792 on a farm in Washington County. He received his early education in nearby schools and then attended Middlebury College, from which he was graduated in 1813. After service in the War of 1812, he studied law in Salem and in 1837 was admitted to the bar in Madison County.

He then moved to Cortland and developed a lucrative practice there. In 1823 Governor Yates appointed him a circuit judge. His territory embraced eight counties, including Otsego, Delaware and Chenango. In 1824 he moved to Cooperstown, which was henceforth his home.

In 1831 Governor Throop appointed Nelson as associate justice of the New York Supreme Court and in 1837 he was named chief justice of this body by Governor Marcy.

In February of 1846 President John Tyler unexpectedly nominated him as an associate justice of the United States Supreme Court. The Senate promptly confirmed and he served on the high tribunal until his retirement in 1872.

Although a staunch Democrat who found himself frequently at odds with the policies of President Lincoln, Justice Nelson was a loyal Unionist and was regarded even by his political enemies as one of the strong men of the court. That Lincoln and Secretary of State Seward had great faith in his wisdom and influence was shown by the episode of the ambassadorial visit to Cooperstown which we related in another story.

In 1871 Nelson was appointed by President Grant to the Joint High Commission to negotiate the Alabama Claims and other matters in dispute between the United States and Great Britain. His service here was brilliant.

Justice Nelson retired in 1872 after fifty years on the bench, a record which up to that time had been held by no other American judge. The New York Tribune said at the time: "It would be difficult to exaggerate the respect and regard which will follow this able and incorruptible jurist from the post he has so long filled with honor to himself and profit to the commonwealth."

His kindness, democracy and deep humanity made Samuel Nelson one of the most respected and best liked men ever to live in Cooperstown. He was a close friend of James Fenimore Cooper and it was a rare experience for residents of the village to listen to their discussions as they sat around the stove in some local store.

Justice Nelson died in 1873 and was buried in the churchyard of Christ Episcopal Church of which he had been a vestryman and warden for many years.

## OLD TANNERIES

Mr. Jones expected the traveling cobbler to be at his farm within a week to make the year's supply of shoes for his family. Raw material was needed so the farmer gathered together the cow skins and deacon hides which he had been saving for some time and made the difficult trip to Seeber's tannery in Oneonta. Here, after much haggling, he traded the raw pelts for a lesser quantity of tanned leather.

In the olden days every community of any size had a tannery where the skins of domestic and wild animals were converted into leather which could be made into shoes, harness and other articles of home and farm use. The mingled odors of hemlock bark, green hides and finished leather must have been far from pleasant but tanneries were a necessary part of the local economy.

Two tanneries are known to have existed in Oneonta. The Seeber plant was located on what is now the corner of Chestnut and Wall Streets. Traces of the old tanks and vats were found when excavating was done in 1883 for the foundations of the old Windsor Hotel. This tannery was built about 1812 and was in operation until the early 1830s.

The other tannery stood on the banks of Oneonta Creek back of the American Legion Home on Main Street. This was run by Sylvanus Smith, who lived in the double house still standing, back from the street, at 372-74 Main. The tannery and the residence were built sometime in the 1830s.

In addition to doing general tanning, Smith made shoes and other leather articles at this location. The plant operated for a couple of decades and was then converted into a slaughter house.

Quantities of water were needed in the tanning process. The Smith plant got its supply from the Oneonta Creek, which had a much larger flow than at present while the water for the Seeber tannery came from a pond in the present Wall Street area.

The tannic acid needed in the operation was supplied by either oak or hemlock bark. Oak-tanned leather was better for the soles of shoes and for harness making. Leather tanned with hemlock bark went into shoe uppers and was used for leather aprons and breeches, once worn extensively by workmen.

Tanning was a slow process and it required several months to finish a hide. First the hair was removed with lye. Then the hides were soaked in a succession of wooden vats containing solutions of varying strengths of tan bark in water, together with extracts from the sumac bush.

Vast quantities of bark were necessary for tanning. In hemlock tanning a cord of bark was used for each ten hides. In the early days hemlock was plentiful in this valley. The river flats, especially north of Main Street, were densely covered with huge hemlocks and there were other stands on the hills. There was much oak in the vicinity but this variety of wood was by no means as plentiful as hemlock.

The tanning industry hereabouts existed for local needs only and bark was a by-product of lumbering, not its main purpose as it was in the Catskills, where the enormous hemlocks were peeled and left to rot on the ground.

## WAS IT A TRICK?

Her normal voice was pleasant but unremarkable, yet upon occasion she could sing in a deep, rich contralto, or, when she willed it, in tones which would reach G above high C; she had not the gift of tongues yet could sing in four languages, with good enunciation and true accent.

This was only one of the strange talents of Rose Helm, one of the most remarkable women who ever lived in Oneonta. Her vocation was insurance and she was a good agent; her avocation was spiritualism and her reputation as a psychic medium was widespread.

Rose Helm came here in 1888 with her husband, Frank Helm, a fine musician who had once played the baritone horn in the United States Marine Band. He established a general insurance agency and taught music on the side.

After her husband's death in 1918, Mrs. Helm continued the agency, building up a reputation for business acumen and integrity. Her home and place of business was an apartment on the third floor of the Oneonta Theatre block.

Spiritualism, which was a belief that departed souls held intercourse with mortals by means of physical phenomena and that certain people, called mediums, had the power to bring about contact with spirits, had quite a vogue during the first two decades of the century. Rose Helm was a medium.

She never capitalized on her supposed psychic powers, avoiding publicity and declining all invitations to appear in public. Once she submitted to tests at the Church of the Divine Inspiration in New York, where she aroused the interest of leading psychical investigators, including Dr. J. H. Hyslop of Columbia University, who was an authority in the field.

Mrs. Helm would give private seances for her friends and we were privileged on three occasions to witness manifestations of her occult art. Back in the '20s she offered to give us a private showing and we accepted out of curiosity. She went through the usual stunts of table tipping, making weird voices issue from a trumpet in mid-air and slate writing.

It was all quite mysterious but we were convinced that there must be a mortal explanation. When we later read Harry Houdini on the subject, it was plain that sleight of hand, ventriloquism and other tricks of the magician provided the answer.

Once she gave a demonstration for a young Hartwick professor, ourself and our dates. What we remember best about this session is that the poor teacher was scared about out of his wits.

We had asked her several times to let us witness her famous singing act but she had always declined on the ground that it took too much out of her. One day she said that she would do it and a time was arranged.

It was quite a performance. She first went into a self-induced trance and then began to sing. Her first song was a German *lieder*, performed in a low contralto. She sang it in true High German, a language which she did not know in her normal state. Next came a song in Parisian French, this time in a very high soprano. French was also a tongue unknown to her.

We have no explanation for this. Perhaps in a trance she could control the pitch and quality of her voice. We do not know. As for the languages, she may have memorized the French and German. Again we do not know. We can testify, however, that it was a remarkable and somewhat awe inspiring performance.



## FEWER JOINERS

This is not the day of the "joiner". There are still hundreds of assorted organizations and countless men belong to them but lodge night is no longer the sacred institution it once was and "the club" has ceased to be the refuge and the sanctum of the male of the species.

There are still men to whom ritualism holds an indefinable appeal and organizations like the Masons and the Oddfellows continue to draw the attention of many but, speaking generally, today's fraternal order must have a bar, bowling alleys and other entertainment features to hold its membership.

Maybe the little woman is the reason. Today she is not content to sit at home and twiddle her thumbs while her spouse spends his evening with the boys. She insists on being a part of his fun and recreation.

Whatever the reason, the list of fraternal and social organizations in Oneonta is much shorter than it was even a few years ago. The following are some of the groups which once flourished here but no longer exist, at least locally:

Order of Solon, Knights of Pythias, Order of Tonti, Maccabees, Order of the Golden Seal, Knights of Honor, Sons of Veterans, Order of Red Men, Silver Cross, Order of United Friends, American Order of United Workmen, Order of Iron Hall.

Long gone are the Oneonta Club, whose building is now the Lewis Funeral Home, and the City Club, which was first quartered in the D. F. Wilber mansion at the corner of Main and Ford and later had rooms on the top floor of the Hotel Oneonta. No women invaded these male hideaways except when dances were held.

No longer around are such groups of young men as the Harmony, Liberty and Bachelor's Clubs. It has been years since the Razzberry Club or the Order of Joined Fists held a meeting. These last two, my friends, were noble organizations.

The Razzberry Club flourished during the Roaring Twenties. It was a loosely knit organization whose perpetual president was Harry Bard, Sr. Whenever the members voted Harry out of office, he declared himself back in. The club met for a dinner whenever the spirit moved. After the meal the men would exchange pleasantries and insults and perhaps slabs of pie at point blank range. Among the ring-leaders of this joyous mob were Jack Sitts, Walt Bliss, Clyde Bresee, Jerry Wilson and Jay Bookhout.

The Order of Joined Fists, which held forth in the early '20s, was a group of men who were still kids at heart. As we recall, the charter members were Alfie Carr, Sandy Henderson, Claude Champlin, Stu Keenan and ourself. Some others who were initiated, in the weirdest and wildest rites ever conceived by the ingenious mind of man, were Fred Bresee, Bill Lunn, George West, Herb and Wen Denton and Harold Mitchell.

In assessing the pleasures of the past it must be remembered that in the days of old there was neither radio nor television. Man's entertainment did not come to him in his home via the air or a wire. He had to seek out his fun and relaxation. He was not surfeited with pleasure as is the case today and when it became his night to howl he took full advantage of the opportunity.

## MILFORD METHODISTS

The Rev. Ebenezer White had great hope of converting Milford to the Gospel when he rode into the hamlet one evening in 1812. He had just come from Middlefield where religious zeal was high but he had a rude awakening when he dismounted from his horse in front of Sayre's store and began to exhort the crowd. Boisterous and angry for whatever reason, the mob ran him out of town.

Such an incident must be considered in the light of the times in which it occurred. In the early years of the last century Otsego County was frontier territory and each community contained rough and ready characters. In each hamlet, however, there was a hard core of men and women who had cleared the wilderness and established a civilization and these people were decent, hard working and God fearing.

It was just such people who founded the Milford Methodist church, a revered and honored institution which in 1964 celebrated the 125th anniversary of its founding.

There were settlers in the Milford area before the Revolution but they left when the conflict started. About 1785 they began to come back, some of the early names being Cully, Mumford, Westcott, Beals, Ford, McCollom, Ward, Moore and Scott. The town was organized in 1796 and was first called Suffrage, the name Milford not being adopted until 1800.

Major John Badger, supervisor and an influential man in the village, can be called the father of Methodism in Milford. He was a Deist and at first was hostile to the Methodist faith. During the winter of 1817 he attended a Methodist meeting in a home near the village and was so impressed by the preaching of Rev. Abner Chase that he became converted and asked the minister to hold services in Milford.

A Methodist Society was organized and for twenty years it held meetings in the schoolhouse. On January 8, 1839, incorporation was effected, the meeting being presided over by Rev. Isaac Grant and Albert Westcott. The elected trustees were Asa Eddy, Daniel Barney, Andrew Shute, Jonas Perry and Richard Swartout.

There had been a big Methodist revival in Milford in 1836 and among the converts were Levi Stewart, Albert Westcott, Mrs. Reuben Nelson, Mrs. Elizabeth Sayre and Julia Shute, all of whom were instrumental in building the church structure in 1839. Early in that year Lawrence McNamee sold a lot to the Society for \$350 and upon this spot, where once had stood a log tavern, the church was erected at a cost of \$1,500.

The edifice was dedicated in December of 1839. It was of wood, thirty by fifty feet in size and was furnished, as was usual in the period, with a gallery, high pulpit and pews with doors. During the years many improvements were made, including raising the steeple, which had been the gift of David Wilber, father of George I., to a height of one hundred and twenty-five feet above the foundation.

Early in the morning of February 8, 1929, fire totally destroyed the church. A decision was immediately made to rebuild and a committee headed by S. S. Harrison went to work. The new structure, which cost approximately \$35,000, was dedicated on March 16, 1930.

Such, in brief, is the history of the Milford Methodist Church, a mighty influence in the community for a century and a quarter.

## MAN OF USEFULNESS

With such men as Franklin D. Roosevelt, Alfred E. Smith, Robert F. Wagner and James J. Walker as his mentors, it is small wonder that Chester A. Miller became a good politician. The young editor of the Oneonta Press, a Democratic weekly, served with those men in the state legislature and as one of the "Thirty Insurgents" who were fighting Tammany Hall, conferred with them daily over a period of months.

But "Chet" Miller was not merely a politician. As teacher, editor, merchant, historian, civic leader and postmaster, he led a remarkably full and active life, to the great benefit of his community.

Chester Miller was born in New Lisbon on May 30, 1880. He received his education at Morris High School, Oneonta State Normal School and Cornell University. His first efforts were in the field of education. He taught in the old school at Stetsonville and then was principal of high schools at Garrattsville, Brookfield and New Berlin.

In 1909 Mr. Miller purchased the Oneonta Press from H. G. Bishop and he edited that paper, as well as the Edmeston Local and the West Winfield Star, which were also weekly journals, until 1920. He became an ardent Democrat and in him the party had a vocal, and sometimes vitriolic, advocate. Chet Miller never pulled his punches and political campaigns of the period were enlivened by the exchanges between his sheet and the strongly Republican weekly, the Oneonta Herald.

He was elected to the State Assembly in 1911 but served only one term, not running for re-election. During that year he and Franklin Roosevelt became warm friends and that contact served Oneonta in good stead when the Bugbee School and Homer Folks Hospital were being sought. Following his brief elective career, Mr. Miller became chairman of the Otsego County Democratic Committee, a post which he held for five years.

In 1920 he left the newspaper game and established a wholesale paper business which he conducted until he became postmaster in 1934 upon appointment of his long time friend, President Roosevelt.

Chester Miller served as postmaster for sixteen years, the longest consecutive term in the history of the local office. During that time the business of the office increased greatly and its efficiency rose to an official mark of ninety-eight per cent. He became secretary-treasurer of the New York State chapter of the National Association of Postmasters, edited the New York State Postmaster, and represented New York and New Jersey on the executive committee of the National Association. His mandatory retirement at the age of seventy came on May 31, 1950.

His hobby was Otsego County history and he became an authority on the subject. He helped organize the Upper Susquehanna Historical Society and was its first president and an active member for years.

He was an enthusiastic Kiwanian and served as president of the Oneonta club and as lieutenant governor of the Fourth District. He was a president of the old Merchants Association and a director of the Chamber of Commerce. An organizer of the Oneonta Community Association, he was its first head.

When Chester A. Miller died in 1958 a career of great usefulness to Otsego County and to Oneonta ended.



## THE DEMON RUM

"Otsego County Awake! Down With the Liquor Traffic!" is the slogan emblazoned on a large poster advertising a county-wide temperance rally held at Stillwater Grove, on the Susquehanna above Emmons, on August 24, 1854.

Eliakim R. Ford is listed as the "president of the day" with Rev. E. Westcott and Rev. C. C. Robinson as chaplains and W. H. Chase, Harvey Baker and E. W. Hopkins acting as marshals. The vice-presidents were Isaac Winans, Otego; J. K. Lull, Morris; Deacon Gilbert, Gilbertsville; M. Bernard, Milford; A. P. Bigelow, Worcester; Russell Waterman, Decatur; Harvey Baker, Jay Slade and Andrew Parish, Oneonta.

The rally, scheduled to start at "10 and ½ a.m." was preceded by a parade led by the Gilbertsville Brass Band. The main speaker of the day was the famous Henry Ward Beecher of Brooklyn.

Eliakim R. Ford, the main figure in the day's proceedings, was a successful merchant and one of the most respected and certainly the most prominent citizen of the small village of Oneonta. Several of his ledgers have been preserved and an examination of the entries reveals much of interest.

It is evident that this apostle of temperance handled much whiskey in the course of a year. However, do not infer from this that E. R. Ford was a hypocrite. He was a pillar in the Baptist Church and a man whose public and private actions could stand the closest scrutiny.

Undoubtedly this good man regretted sincerely that he must deal in a commodity whose use he deplored but there was little he could do about it except to preach temperance. He could close up shop, of course, but this would simply mean that others would sell more liquor.

It must be remembered that in those days there was little money in circulation and that business was conducted pretty largely by barter. Whiskey was an excellent bartering commodity.

The few existing roads were in poor condition and it was difficult for the farmer to get his surplus grain to market. Each township had at least one distillery and he could easily take the grain to a nearby still and trade it for the demon rum. This could be taken to the general store and bartered for whatever supplies were needed.

In 1820 there were sixty-seven distilleries in Otsego County and ten years later there were fifty-six, including eight in the town of New Lisbon and eight in Hartwick. The town of Oneonta had three.

Under the hill where River Street, after crossing the lower viaduct, goes upgrade to Route 7, was Shepherd's Still, famous for many years. Where the Bern store now is on Broad Street, a large distillery was in long time operation. There was no Broad Street then and access to the still was by a path beside the Ford stone store standing on what is now the corner of Broad. Another smaller establishment was located on Silver Creek about opposite the entrance road to Hartwick College.

Although Otsego was once known throughout the country for the quantity and quality of its hops, there appears to have been only one brewery in the county.

## WONDERFUL 1904

The volunteer firemen had a long march that September evening in 1904. Those who participated in the annual firemen's parade and inspection had to walk from the firehouse on Main Street up to Third, then down to Luther Street and back to where they had started. But for two young boys, Lincoln Kellogg and Edwin Moore, it was not nearly far enough.

The lads were mascots of the A. L. Kellogg Hook and Ladder Company and, attired in uniforms precisely like those of their elders, they rode on the rear step of the fire truck. What more could heaven hold?

What else was happening in the village of Oneonta that first week in September in 1904, one of the golden years with the agony of World War I yet a decade away.

All was not peace and tranquility, however. It was a national election year and passions were being aroused to a degree that not even the present can match. If you think that today's political campaigns are bitter and at times vicious, you should have lived in the good old days when "liar", "thief", "crook" and "scoundrel" were among the milder terms directed at the candidates.

President Theodore Roosevelt was the Republican candidate, running against Judge Alton B. Parker, a virtual unknown even in his own state of New York. Teddy was very popular but there were many who did not like "that damned cowboy" and an interesting campaign lay ahead.

It was announced that the cornerstone of the new State Armory would be laid on October 1 with Masonic ceremonies. Company G, which had just been issued new Krag rifles, had gone to Syracuse to participate in the events of the State Fair.

Over a thousand people attended the clambake put on by the allied D.&H. brotherhoods at Otsego Park, an amusement resort on the trolley line between West Oneonta and Laurens. Special open cars left the Chestnut Street trolley station at half hour intervals all during the day and evening.

A news item disclosed that W. C. C. Blundon, manager of the steam laundry, had purchased an automobile, the eleventh car to be owned in the village. He lived on Walnut Street near our home and well do we remember that awesome one cylinder Cadillac with its engine tucked under the front seat.

"The Mummy and the Humming Bird" would open the play season at the Oneonta Theatre, to be followed by "A Ragged Hero" and "Driven from Home". These were one night stands. Pawnee Bill's Wild West Show would exhibit in the near future on the Wilcox Flats circus grounds down by the river.

To satisfy passengers who complained that they had to bolt their meals at the Oneonta and Cobleskill D.&H. station restaurants, the company announced that cafe cars would be placed on two fast trains. These trains would not have to have food breaks and as a result would pick up ten minutes between Oneonta and Albany.

The carnival time of hop picking had started and the great days of the Oneonta Fair were just ahead. Movies, radio, TV, fast cars—who had need for such things in That Wonderful Year of 1904?

## SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY

As we swung aboard the New York Central rail-bus for the inspection trip of the proposed DO Line we thought of how ironic the situation was. We were going to make the journey from Bloomville to Oneonta on a gasoline propelled vehicle, the very thing which had knocked the railroad from its perch on the top of the transportation ladder.

We got under way, not to the accompaniment of the sound of escaping steam and the pleasant notes of an engine bell, but to the noise of shifting gears as the chauffeur-engineer performed the simple task of getting a motor car in motion. There was one familiar sensation, however—the slight jolt as the wheels passed over rail joints.

As we left Bloomville we could see the depressed circle where the turntable had once been. From 1892 until the road was pushed to Oneonta in 1900 this tiny hamlet, where milk was first pasteurized in America, was the terminus of the Ulster and Delaware, the predecessor of the Central.

We had not traveled the line for many years but the scenery was still familiar. On the left we could see the road leading to the farm in the Kortright hills where our maternal ancestors settled nearly 175 years ago. Through rolling pasture land we went and soon passed what had once been Kortright Station.

Now for the run to East Meredith, the market town for many of our forebears. There was a time when this small village had two general stores, a hotel, two blacksmith shops, a feed store, a hardware store, a meat market and grist, saw and wood-working mills, as well as a church and its own school.

We stopped by the old Hanford mill, later run by the Pizza brothers and now owned by West-Nesbitt. Part of the mill pond remains and the water wheel and grinding stones are intact although they have not turned for years.

We pushed down the narrow valley from East Meredith to Davenport Center, rolling along through a second growth forest with Kortright Creek close on our left. It is normally a babbling brook but with the slightest encouragement it can become a raging torrent.

Presently we swung into the fertile valley of the Charlotte and approached Davenport Center. We went under the vehicular overpass and then beneath the ridiculous pedestrian elevated walk-way, possibly the least used bridge of its kind in America and a monument to the stupidity of bureaucracy.

We crossed the Charlotte and entered the wide Susquehanna valley, skirting the site of prehistoric Adequantaga, the largest Indian village in this vicinity. Soon we passed the old Electric Lake and entered the city limits. Then we were at the ancient station, which will soon become a railroad museum, and the journey, which we had made many times in the past but under much different circumstances, was over.

As we clambered down from the hi-rail bus we half expected to see the horse drawn carryalls from the Central and Windsor hotels waiting for fares. But it was 1965, not 1905, and we made the trip downtown, strangely enough, in the same conveyance on which we had ridden the rails.



## DAD BROWNELL

"Dad" was the affectionate title his fellow Kiwanians gave to the kindly man who had been their secretary ever since the club was founded. He earned that name many times through the years as he steered the club during its growing period and gave advice and encouragement to its members.

But devotion to Kiwanis and to another great love, the First Presbyterian Church, were only avocations for Dr. Arthur H. Brownell. In real life, so to speak, he was a widely known physician and surgeon, specializing in disorders of the eye, ear, nose and throat.

Arthur Hamilton Brownell was born in Hamilton, N. Y., on January 22, 1863, and was the son of Hamilton and Lucy (Little) Brownell. He attended the schools of his native village and then entered Hamilton College at Clinton, from which he was graduated in 1884. He attended the School of Medicine of the University of Michigan and obtained his degree from that institution in 1887.

He was briefly an instructor in ophthalmology at Ann Arbor and then interned at Cancer Hospital in New York City. Following a short period as a practitioner in Hastings, Nebraska, he came in 1889 to Oneonta, where he used his knowledge and his skills for over half a century.

Dr. Brownell was on the staff of Fox Memorial Hospital when it opened its doors in 1900 and continued his association with the institution during the remainder of his life. He was an Otsego County coroner for six years and served three terms as president of the Otsego County Medical Society. He had a considerable reputation in the fields of his specialization and his practice was extensive.

He became a member of the First Presbyterian Church soon after he came here and through the years gave much of his time to its work. He was an elder for nearly fifty years and was superintendent of the Sunday School for many years. He was treasurer of the Otsego Bible Society for a decade.

Dr. Brownell early became interested in the work of the Young Men's Christian Association and served as its president and as a trustee for twelve years. He was a member of Oneonta Masonic Lodge, had been president of the Oneonta Club and was secretary for ten years of the Oneonta Automobile Club.

When the Oneonta Kiwanis Club was organized in 1923 he became its charter secretary and served in that capacity for twenty years, resigning only when failing health made it impossible for him to fulfill his duties. He gave a great deal of time to the affairs of the club and was known far and wide as a model secretary.

Dr. Brownell was twice married. His first wife was Mary Ella Mills, whom he married in Oneonta in 1890 and who died in 1898. By her he had two sons, Adon H. Brownell and Dr. Morton E. Brownell, who was associated with his father here for some years. Two of Dr. Morton Brownell's sons are physicians with practices in the middle west. Dr. A. H. Brownell's second wife was Jane Porter Lynch of Delhi, who bore him two children, Stuart P. and Elizabeth Brownell.

His death on January 10, 1945, following an illness of about two years, ended a career of great usefulness. Dr. Arthur H. Brownell gave much of himself, not only as a physician but as a public spirited citizen who played a full part in the varied life of his community.

## FOLSOM MAN

The Indian stood on the verge of the reedy tarn, his only weapon a wooden spear tipped with a flint head carefully flaked to a cutting edge. Presently a huge bison came to the bank and began to drink. Through brawn and bone the savage drove the javelin, straight into the big animal's vitals. Another spear found its mark and the creature dropped, mortally wounded.

That action took place about ten thousand years ago. In 1926 a cowboy riding through an arroyo near the town of Folsom in New Mexico, saw bones protruding from a steep bank. Excavation revealed the skeleton of the prehistoric beast and the two spear heads which had killed it. The flints were like no arrowheads which had been found on the Apache and Ute camping grounds. They were straight-sided and lacked the usual notch of the Indian arrowhead. There was a hollow groove running up each side, making the tips resemble a short bayonet in general shape and outline.

Many scientists gathered at the site and all agreed that the spearheads were made by the earliest Americans whose handiwork had as yet been discovered. These so-called Folsom men roamed the country in search of game near the end of the Pleistocene, or Ice, Age, and were beyond doubt the progenitors of all American Indians. Their ancestors had come from Asia over the land bridge which once existed where now is Bering Strait, between Alaska and Russia.

Folsom points have been found in small quantity in all of the eastern states, indicating that the first humans in the regions were bands of Folsom Indians on hunting expeditions. The finds have all been made on or near the surface, showing that the artifacts were not as ancient as those discovered in the West. Archeologists, aided by the Carbon 14 technique, figure that the archaic Indian first appeared in central New York about four thousand years ago.

Two arrowheads of authentic Folsom design have been found in the Susquehanna valley, one near Otego and the other in the vicinity of Milford. The original Folsom men used only spears, the bow being developed thousands of years later.

The first Folsom men lived in the last stages of the Ice Age, during which great masses of ice accumulated on the continents of the northern hemisphere. It might appear that those were poor times for the development of man but the contrary is true. The great glaciers did not cover all of the land and in the areas surrounding the ice masses there was abundant rainfall and the vegetation was heavy and lush. On this surplus of fodder lived a teeming animal life. This was the age of the mastodon and the mammoth, of the Pleistocene horse and the huge bison, camel, antelope, moose and caribou.

When the glaciers melted, the plentiful fauna and flora disappeared and Folsom man was forced into the life of a sedentary agriculturist. His habitat, his mode of life and his menu changed completely.

People of today are inclined to believe that this is the most difficult period in history because of the necessity of adjusting to the fact of atomic power. The Indians who lived at the end of the Pleistocene era faced much greater problems but they survived and so will we.

## AN ABLE JURIST

Few Oneontans of his generation had the respect and esteem that was accorded Lee D. VanWoert by his fellow citizens. During his comparatively brief career this attorney and jurist set standards of excellence in the even-handed administration of justice, especially in juvenile cases, that it would be difficult to surpass.

Lee Dutton VanWoert, scion of one of the first families to settle in the town of Oneonta, was born on May 14, 1888, in the town of Franklin and was the son of Hamilton F. VanWoert and Mary Louise Sloat. The family soon moved to Oneonta, where the father was a prominent photographer for years.

He attended the public schools and then the high school department at the State Normal and after graduation from the latter institution entered Amherst College, leaving there in his junior year to study law with his father-in-law, J. F. Thompson, in Oneonta. He was admitted to the bar in 1913.

A few days after he became an attorney Mr. VanWoert was appointed city prosecuting attorney by Mayor Frank Blodgett and City Judge W. I. Bolton. The quality of his work with juveniles brought him the appointment of county probation officer by County Judge A. L. Kellogg in 1916.

He was elected city judge in 1923 and was returned to office with ever increasing majorities until 1930 when he was chosen Otsego County and Children's Court judge. Lee VanWoert gave an unusual amount of time to the work of the courts over which he presided. He considered each offender to be an individual problem and would never pass sentence until he had thoroughly studied the person's background and assessed the chances of rehabilitation.

His reputation as a careful and conscientious judge was widespread and for several years he was asked to preside over special terms of the Nassau County court. During his tenure as city judge he redrafted the city court act and saw it passed by the state legislature.

Lee VanWoert was active in the city, county, sixth district and state bar associations and served on many committees of those bodies. He had a term as president of the New York State Association of Children's Court Judges.

This active man was a charter member of the Elks Lodge and of the Rotary Club and was a member of the Oneonta Club, the Country Club and the Masonic Lodge, giving some of his precious time to each group to which he belonged. He was a member for some years of the executive committee of the Otschodela Boy Scout Council.

St. James' Episcopal Church was close to his heart. He was a vestryman for twenty-five years and was senior warden at the time of his death. For some time he was a member of the Diocesan Board of Missions and a trustee of the Susan Fenimore Cooper Foundation.

He took an active part in the business world and was a director and vice-president of the Mutual Casualty Insurance Company of New York and president of the Oneonta Oil and Fuel Company.

Lee D. VanWoert died on May 18, 1937, and was buried in Glenwood Cemetery. He had married Ruth Lane Thompson in 1910 and she survived, together with two sons, John and James VanWoert, and a brother, Ray VanWoert, now of Peekskill.



## FIRST BROADCAST

"This is WGY, the General Electric Station at Schenectady, N. Y. This program is originating at Oneonta, N. Y., the City of the Hills. For the next two hours you will be entertained by musical talent from this pleasant community, which I am proud to claim as my home town."

The voice was that of William H. Fay, speaking from the Amber Room of the Hotel Oneonta. The time was Friday evening, June 11, 1926, and the occasion was the first nationwide radio broadcast ever made from Oneonta. There were no national networks then but WGY was a powerful station and its voice could be heard from coast to coast in that time of few stations and little interference.

This was not the first radio broadcast ever made from Oneonta. Russell E. Brigham, the city's wireless telegraph and radio pioneer, had done a little broadcasting back in 1922, and in 1925 a few programs were sent out from the stage of the Oneonta Theatre but the power output was low and the broadcasts could be heard over a very small area.

The program had been arranged by Mr. Fay, a WGY vocalist and announcer who had grown up in Oneonta, and by the Chamber of Commerce, which paid the charge, about \$200, which the Otsego and Delaware Telephone Company made for arranging the wire hook-up to Schenectady.

The Company G Band, directed by W. S. Deusler, led off with "The Enchantress" march, which was followed by several other selections. After the band came the Harmony Boys quartet, composed of Newton Darling, Byron Chesbro, S. Edward McKean and Philip Maples. The accompanist was Mrs. Guy B. Fay.

The Bon Ton orchestra played several dance tunes and Miss Annie Waters (now Mrs. William B. Mason, Oneonta's leading soprano for years), sang a group of numbers. She was accompanied by Mrs. Wendell Morgan.

One of the highlights of the evening was the appearance of the Juvenile String Quartet. This group of violinists, all under sixteen years of age and all pupils of Robert E. Gardner, numbered John Latcher, John Brinkman, Robert McMorris and Warren Pratt with Miss Dorothy McMorris (now Mrs. Reid Morris) at the piano. They played several selections and Robert McMorris rendered a solo.

Byron H. Chesbro, the city's golden tenor, sang several solos, which were, as always, well received. The Bon Ton orchestra closed the program with some more popular melodies of the day and Announcer Fay said good night for Oneonta at about 11 p.m.

Before the program was half over, telephone calls began to pour into the hotel switchboard and into the WGY studios at Schenectady. Reception was good over a wide area and evidently thousands of people heard the broadcast.

Among the first calls received were ones from former Oneontans Rev. Dr. B. M. Johns of Wilmington, Del., and James Matteson of New York. They were delighted with the program and with the quality of its reception. A man calling from Royalton, Vt., said that his family and some friends had heard the broadcast. They had never heard of Oneonta before but thought that its musical talent indicated that it must be quite a place.

## MAN OF PROMISE

If Alfred Carr had been granted the normal span of life and were living today, he would be one of Oneonta's most honored and respected citizens. That was the promise of a life that in its less than thirty years held more of accomplishment than most men can claim in the traditional three score years and ten.

Alfred VanNess Carr was born in Oneonta June 25, 1898, and was the only son of Alfred W. and Ida (Groat) Carr. He received his preliminary education in the grades at the State Normal School and then entered Oneonta High School, from which he was graduated in 1916.

He was deeply interested in every phase of his school work and was active in many organizations, especially the Dramatic Club, in which his ability as an actor was frequently displayed. At the time his fatal illness began he was president of the Oneonta High School Alumni Association.

In the fall of 1916 he entered Amherst College but was forced to leave early the following year because of the serious illness of his father. In the fall of 1918 he again entered Amherst as a member of the Student Army Training Corps but was again compelled to withdraw because of an accident suffered in the course of his training. Although his college career was brief, he was greatly interested in his erstwhile Alma Mater and returned frequently, especially for functions of his fraternity, Phi Gamma Delta.

For a man still in his twenties Alfred Carr's prominence in the affairs of the city was remarkable. A communicant of St. James' Episcopal Church since he was eleven years old, he was very active in its affairs. During his boyhood days he was a member of the vested choir and cross bearer. Later he became a vestryman and treasurer of the church as well as treasurer of its Men's Club.

He had been a member of Oneonta Lodge of Elks for several years and at the time of his death was Esteemed Leading Knight. Had he lived to become Exalted Ruler the next year he would have been the youngest presiding officer in the history of the lodge. He was also a member of Oneonta Masonic Lodge, the Oneonta Club, the Oneonta Country Club and the American Legion, as well as being a charter member of Kiwanis.

Following the death of his father in December of 1917 he became president of the Carr Clothing Company, Inc., the predecessor of Henderson's, and the affairs of that concern were his main interest. He was active in the Chamber of Commerce and was vice-president of its Merchants Division.

Alfred V. Carr died on July 23, 1925, following a nine week battle against the rare but fatal Hodgkin's disease. The funeral, in his beloved St. James' Church, was one of the largest ever held in Oneonta. Burial was by the side of his parents in Glenwood Cemetery. Mrs. W. R. Walrath of 10 Myrtle Avenue and Mrs. Richard Applebaugh of 48 Union Street are his sisters.

Close personal friendship may have colored our appraisal of Alfred Carr but we do not think so. His accomplishments during the comparatively few years of his life and the fact that he was able to gain so many true friends are things that speak for themselves.

In choosing people to discuss we have always tried to pick those who left their mark for good upon the community. Despite his youth, we believe that Alfred V. Carr was such a man.

## PAY UP OR ELSE

After Dr. Nathaniel Gott had restored you to health it was best not to forget to pay his bill. If you did, the fiery physician would threaten you with chastisement, often expressing his warnings in verse. He'd make it hot; he would by Gott.

This eccentric healer, who retained the colonial garb of knee breeches, buckled shoes and three-cornered hat throughout his lifetime and always ate from a wooden trencher lest he dull his knife, was one of Otsego's earliest doctors and a founder of the county medical society.

Born in Wenham, Mass., in 1755, Nathaniel Gott was a descendant of the Puritans. He began the study of medicine when he was sixteen, following a classical education. In 1775 he was a minute man at Lexington. The following year he began a series of sea trips as a surgeon on American privateers, studying medicine with Dr. Amos Putnam of Danvers, Mass., between voyages.

On one of his trips abroad he was licensed by the Amsterdam College of Surgeons and later served in hospitals in Portugal and Spain. He returned home in 1778 and after practicing briefly in his home town joined the migration of New Englanders to the West. Following short stays in Cheshire, Massachusetts, and Guildhall, Vermont, he came to Cooperstown in 1792 and opened an office. In 1798 he moved to Hartwick, where he practiced for nearly thirty years.

Dr. Gott prepared most of his prescriptions, as was the common practice among doctors in those days, and he became skilled in the art. He owned part of a drug-store in Cooperstown and while practicing in Hartwick was also a partner in a drug firm.

The Otsego County Medical Society was organized in 1808 and Dr. Gott became a charter member. He was actually the father of the Society for in 1797 he had called the physicians of the county together to discuss mutual problems and had acted as chairman of the meeting. These conferences continued at intervals until the actual formation of the Society.

Dr. Gott was better educated than most physicians of the time. There were a few doctors among the immigrants from Europe and a very few Americans went abroad to study medicine. The average aspirant, however, served an apprenticeship with a physician, observing his methods and reading the medical books in his library.

The first medical school in the state was started in New York City in 1808 and the second at Fairfield, Herkimer County, in 1812. There would be no others for twenty years. The medical societies in the various counties were authorized by law to license applicants who met their standards of proficiency.

Dr. Gott was regarded as a good physician but, as we have noted, he was a somewhat choleric individual. He once published the following rhymed notice in the Otsego Herald: "Says Gott, I'll tell you what, I'm called on hot, All round the Ot-Segonian plot, To pay my shot, For Pill and pot. If you don't trot Up to the spot, And ease my lot, You'll smell it hot. NATHANIEL GOTT."

He was twice married, first to Sarah Brigham and following her death to Hannah Bradford, a descendant of William Bradford, long governor of the Plymouth Colony. Dr. Gott died in 1828 at the home of his son, Nathaniel Gott, Jr., in Clarence, N. Y.



## *WILLIAM H. HOFFMAN*

It was an awkward looking contrivance but it worked, and at last the back-breaking task of pressing clothes by hand was over, at least for William H. Hoffman. The Hoff-Man steam pressing machine had been invented by his brother, Adon, and the one which W. H. Hoffman installed in his Oneonta plant more than a half century ago was one of the first to be made.

The machine revolutionized the industry and would eventually be used in every part of the world, and the United States Hoffman Machinery Manufacturing Company, which Adon formed to make it, would earn millions for the Oneontan's brother. William Hoffman would suggest many improvements in later models of the labor saving invention.

William H. Hoffman, one of the most public spirited men who ever lived in Oneonta, was born in Clyde, N. Y., on September 25, 1880, and was the son of Seymour and Julia (Exner) Hoffman. He attended the Clyde schools and then learned the trade of harness maker. Probably influenced by his brother's interest in a pressing machine, he decided to enter the cleaning and pressing business and in 1906 came to Oneonta, his wife's home town, where he set up shop in the basement of the Windsor Hotel.

He soon moved to the second floor of the Fritts block on the southeast corner of Main and Chestnut and it was here that he used his first Hoff-Man presser. Later he purchased the Dr. Hamilton brick house at the corner of Main Street and Hamilton Avenue and remodeled it for his use. In 1926 he built a brick block on the site and in 1940 razed this and erected the large structure now occupied by Sears, Roebuck.

For years there were few civic activities in which Bill Hoffman did not have a part. He was made a director of the YMCA in 1915 and later became its president and then chairman of the finance committee. He was head of the building committee when the swimming pool was added to the Y's facilities.

He was at one time president of the Chamber of Commerce and a member of the Salvation Army Advisory Board, the Otsego County Laboratories Board, the Boy Scout Board and the Hartwick College Honorary Board of Patrons.

Mr. Hoffman was active in the Liberty Loan drives in both World Wars and during World War II was chairman of the Oneonta War Price and Rationing Board, doing a very difficult job in an eminently fair and efficient manner. He also served a year as the city's water commissioner.

For years he was an interested member of Oneonta Masonic Lodge and of the Rotary Club. An ardent horseman, much of what little spare time he had was spent in the saddle.

Mr. Hoffman married Miss Anna Schermerhorn, a teacher at Clyde and a graduate of Oneonta Normal School. She is still living as are their three children: Wesley, who conducts the Hoffman cleaning and pressing concern; William, who heads the Hoffman insurance agency; and Jane, the wife of Samuel LaMonica.

William H. Hoffman died on October 16, 1946, and was buried in Glenwood Cemetery.

"Where you are, there let me stay," the Indian maiden Manitou had often told her lover, Manitee. When Changu, a rival brave, pushed Manitee off a cliff and the daughter of Chief Ske-ne-vas found his body at the bottom of the gorge which now bears her name, the young girl climbed to the brink of the abyss and plunged to death beside her beloved.

That is the story which residents of the delightful village of Schenevus will tell you about the daughter of the Indian chief who gave his name to the community once called Jacksonboro. And who are we to deny the truth of this charming tale, although in deference to historical accuracy it must be admitted that there is some doubt as to whether such characters ever existed.

There are many stories about Ske-ne-vas, including one that he had daughters called Oneonta and Otego after which these townships were named. However, our attempt to trace these stories to their origin ran into a wall of silence.

Hurd, in his History of Otsego County, published in 1878, makes no mention of the chief. A. Hotchkin, writing in 1876 of the town of Maryland and the village of Schenevus, says that Ske-ne-vas meant "speckled fish" in the Indian tongue and was the name given by the redskins to the main stream passing through the village. He makes no mention of the chief or of the legend.

Dr. Beauchamp's work on the origin of place names says that Schenevus was named after a civilized Indian who trapped in the region before the Revolution but he does not call him a chief. We searched through Willard Huntington's extensive notes on early Otsego County history for any reference to Ske-ne-vas and the stories surrounding him but found nothing despite the fact that Mr. Huntington makes much use of the folklore and legends of the county.

The town of Maryland, in which Schenevus is located, was taken from Worcester, along with Decatur and Westford, in 1808. The first settlement of which there is authentic record was in 1790 when Israel and Eliphas Spencer came from Columbia County with a cousin, Phineas Spencer, and Elisha Chamberlin.

Josiah Chase and Joshua Bigelow came in 1791, bought a thousand acres of land and built homes near the junction of Elk and Schenevus creeks. A good share of Schenevus village was built on that plot.

The village was first called Jacksonboro and a postoffice of that name was established in 1829 with Joseph Carpenter as the first postmaster. Some time before 1840 the name was changed to Schenevus.

On April 20, 1870, Schenevus was incorporated as a village and received its charter. At that time there was a population of 726 with 149 families. The assessed valuation of real and personal property was \$87,835, of which \$7,000 was owned by the railroad.

It really matters little whether Ske-ne-vas was an Indian chief or a speckled fish. Certain it is that the Algonquin and the Iroquois inhabited the region long before the white man put in an appearance and the Indian name "Schenevus" with its pleasant sound is a natural for a pleasant village filled with pleasant people.

## SOME OLD HOUSES

The house to the rear of the Shell service station at 300 Main Street was once one of the finest residences in Oneonta, standing well back from the street with a terraced lawn in front. It was the home of Frank D. Miller, a prominent hop and lumber dealer and one of the men who brought gas and electricity to Oneonta.

This house, built in 1904, replaced the graceful Charles Reynolds home which had stood on the site since 1871. It was moved back and remodeled as a carriage house and is still standing.

The home of Dr. E. J. Keegan at 330 Main is well over a century old. It was for years the residence of David M. Miller, the father of Frank D. Miller. We do not know the exact date of its erection but Mr. Miller enlarged and improved it in 1867 so it was probably built some years before that date.

David Miller was a hop merchant. In 1870 he built a storehouse on Walnut Street which years later was converted into a dwelling still standing at No. 22. It was owned and occupied for years by Frank A. Herrieff.

The Wilber Mansion on Ford Avenue, now owned by the city, was built in 1875 by George I. Wilber, the banker, industrialist and philanthropist. As originally constructed it had a flat roof. The gingerbread was added years later during the dark age of American architecture.

The Christian Science building on Chestnut Street just above the Oneonta Theatre replaced a house built in 1868 by Potter Burton, a jeweler here for years. The Christian Scientists purchased the property in 1902.

One of the oldest houses in the city is the white cottage just to the left of the Victory Supermarket on Chestnut Street. The house formerly stood on the front of the lot and was the residence of John Cutshaw, a shoemaker and a longtime sexton of the First Presbyterian Church.

The house was built prior to 1841 for in that year Oneonta's first schoolhouse was moved from its Main Street location where Broad Street now meets Main and attached to the rear of the Cutshaw dwelling. It was taken off when the house was moved back to its present location.

The house occupied by the WDOS studios was originally the Seeley Wood farmhouse. This farm included much of the hill to the north of West Street and extended beyond the railroad tracks. The house was later the home of Colonel W. W. Snow, then of Marquis L. Keyes and lastly of his son, D. F. Keyes. It is about one hundred years old.

The house on Elm Street now occupied by Oneonta Video was built by James Cope, a prominent citizen of the period, in 1870. It was bought in 1880 by Fred Wilcox and for years there was a livery stable back of it. Later it was the residence of Dr. David H. Mills and of his widow, Ethel (Rowe) Mills.

The house two doors above where live the nuns who teach in St. Mary's School, was built in 1870 by E. M. Vosburgh. It was for years the home of Charles Smith (father of Mrs. J. A. Dewar), banker, industrialist, member of the Assembly and Grand Master of Masons in the State of New York.



## THE LONGEST DAY

The attack started at 5:30 on the cold, wet morning of September 29, 1918. By day's end the strongly fortified Hindenburg Line in the Somme region north of Paris had been smashed, but at frightful cost to the 107th Infantry, 27th Division, of which Oneonta's Company G was a part. In the bloody fighting around Guillemont Farm and The Knoll the 107th had 377 men killed and 658 wounded, the heaviest loss sustained by any American regiment in a single day in the whole course of World War I.

On that day forty-seven years ago, Peter C. Virtell of Maryland; Henry Reed, Robert G. Cobbett and James F. Hayne of Cooperstown; Fred A. Hall and Asa C. Strong of Milford; and Leon E. Eckler of Oneonta were killed. Charles Saxton and Elbert N. Patten of Oneonta were wounded and died later while Earl R. Gardner of Oneonta contracted pneumonia during the day and died soon after. Many other members of the company were wounded during the fierce action.

The local national guard company traces its history back to 1812 when John McDonald organized a militia company. In the Civil War the unit served as Company K of the 76th New York Volunteer Regiment, an outfit which was in the field for nearly four years and which lost half of its men in thirty minutes on Gettysburg's first day.

During the Spanish-American War it served in Hawaii as Company G, 1st New York Infantry, and in World War I it was Company G of the 107th. The group, still Company G, was a part of the 106th Infantry, 27th Division, in World War II and fought bloodily on the islands of the Pacific. Its guidons now carry a different letter but to those who once served with it the company will always be "G".

On February 4, 1917, the company, as part of the First Regiment, was ordered on active duty along the Catskill Aqueduct to help guard New York City's water supply. It remained there until it was mustered into federal service soon after this country entered World War I, and was sent to Van Cortlandt Park, New York. On September 16, 1917, it was sent to Camp Wadsworth, S. C.

At Wadsworth the regiment was split. The majority of the men went with the silk stocking 7th of New York to form the 107th while the remainder went into the First Pioneer Infantry, which also saw much action in France and went into Germany with the Army of Occupation.

The 27th Division sailed from Newport News, Virginia, on May 18, 1918, and arrived at St. Nazaire, France, eleven days later. It was here that the men saw for the first time the words "Quarante hommes et huit chevaux," the legend painted on the small French boxcars to denote that their capacity was either forty men or eight horses.

The division trained in Northern Flanders and was then brigaded with the British Fourth Army, with which it fought until the end of the war. In addition to the assault on the Hindenburg Line the 107th was in action at Ypres, Dickebusch, Mount Kemmel, Vierstradt Ridge and St. Souplet.

The 27th Division returned to the States in March of 1919 and was demobilized at Camp Upton, Long Island, early in April. Not many of the men who fought with the 107th Infantry in France are now alive but those who are have many memories on each September 29th.

## THOSE WERE THE DAYS

As we walked through the well equipped Star plant the other day we thought of our days on the paper in the old building on Broad Street and we wondered how a daily paper could have been published with the equipment and the small force then available. One was, however, and we think that it was a pretty good one.

In the '20s the Star plant was in the building now occupied by the Bern Furniture Company. In the front of the first floor were the business offices, and the composing room and the job shop were in the rear. The press, casting department and mail room were in the basement. The editorial offices and the advertising department occupied half of the second floor.

The Star was a smaller newspaper in those days, with fewer pages and less circulation but we managed to cram a lot of news into it. There was much less advertising carried than now. Frank Hill was the only advertising man but he was a good one.

The mechanical equipment, including the press, was good but was limited in quantity and of course was not as modern as it is today. Fred Jackson, Jay Lawson and a girl or two ran the business end. Jesse Leal bossed the job shop, which turned out a surprising amount of work despite its limited facilities.

Harry W. Lee was owner, editor, publisher and general manager and also wrote many news stories. His copy was good but it was "dirty" inasmuch as he seldom used punctuation marks. In our book he was a good man to work for.

Andrew B. Saxton, a grand gentleman, ran the editorial page, handled country correspondence and collected "personals". A telegraph editor (in our day it was first Ralph Wyckoff, followed by Ben Mahaffy and then Clarence Slade) handled Associated Press news and made up the front page.

The AP dispatches came by telephone during three half hour periods beginning at nine and eleven p.m. and one a.m. Barely enough was received to fill a page, in contrast to the great amount of stuff that comes over the news tickers today. The deadline for pages one and five (local news then as now) was two a.m. and the presses rolled at about three o'clock.

There was another reporter and ourself. Later we became city editor, which added some duties and responsibilities but did not lessen our leg work as a reporter. In those days a newsman on a small city paper handled every type of news—city hall, weddings, fires, obituaries, sports, murders, trials and anything else that happened.

A reporter was on duty virtually all the time. We went to work at about eleven in the morning and got home around two the next morning. When city editor we stayed until the paper was put to bed about three a.m. Nobody had a full day off a week, not even Saturday or Sunday. News could break at any time and you were expected to be around when it did.

Mr. Lee was of the opinion that a reader was more interested in the activities and comings and goings of his neighbors and friends than he was in how many yards of concrete went into a paving job and hence the news focus was upon people.

Newspaper work was a hard way to earn a living in days of yore but if printer's ink once got into your blood, you were hooked and no other vocation had the same appeal.

## THOSE OLD CARS

That 1911 Octoauto, with its eight wheels, four on each end, was a crazy looking thing. The claims of its maker were equally outlandish. It was "the only easy riding car in the world", "the only car in the world built on the principle of a Pullman Palace Car", and "the easiest car in the world on tires."

Many weird and wonderful contraptions were put on the market during the first quarter century of the development of the motor car. Another monstrous looking vehicle was the Bi-Autogo, made between 1908 and 1912. This had six wheels, one large in front and back and two sets of two small ones near the middle. However, when in motion it used only the two single wheels, like a motorcycle. This car had one of the first V-8 engines.

In 1913 appeared the Duck, which was unique in that the driver sat on the rear seat and the passengers on two folding seats immediately in front of him. This was advertised as "new, exclusive, individual, different, like no other, and something you will want."

When the automobile first made its appearance there were carriage factories scattered all over the country and many of these started manufacturing motor cars. In fact the first autos looked like buggies with an engine mounted under the wagon frame.

Studebaker was one of the largest wagon makers in the country and soon switched to the horseless carriage. A car called the Hatfield was made for a time in the old wagon works at Sidney. Scintilla Magneto later took over the plant.

Detroit is now the automobile capital of the world but before Ford began large scale production only a small proportion of the cars made in America came out of the Michigan city. At one time there were eighty-two different makes of autos manufactured in Cleveland. Ever hear of any of these: Ben Hur, Buckeye, Disbrow, Globe, Ideal, Moore, Owen-Magnetic, Royal Tourist, Merit, Krastin, Templar, Unito?

Many cars were made in Indianapolis and Cincinnati while Wisconsin once made a strong bid to become the country's leading auto state. Famous cars once made in Wisconsin included the Case, Mitchell, Kissel Kar and Lafayette while among the lesser known makes were the Hayberg, Monarch, Merkel, Pennington, Superior, Earl, F.W.D., Battship, Petrel, Ogren and Badger.

Every kind of company got into the act of auto making during the early days. The washer people out in Iowa made the Maytag car back in 1910 while the Moline was put out by the plow company. Sears, Roebuck manufactured the Sears from 1905 to 1910 in six models selling from \$370 up.

The American Locomotive Company made the Alco, a luxury car. The 1912 model, which has "Pullman ventilators in the roof, upholstery ten inches deep and illuminated steps", sold for \$7,250.

The automobile was such a novelty and created so much interest in the early days that there was one time when there were twenty-nine plays on the New York stage which were either built around the automobile or in which a car appeared on stage.



## MONTH THAT WAS

It was the month that changed the course of history; the month that ended "the good old days" and launched the world on a new orbit along which it has been whirling dizzily ever since. It was August, 1914.

On the surface things progressed about as usual in Oneonta in that month which saw the start of World War I, but there was a subtle difference. The ever spreading conflict in Europe engaged the attention of about everyone. We recall that the war was the principal topic of conversation. The concern was general rather than personal for few seriously thought that the United States would ever be drawn into the maelstrom of hate and violence.

That month the 121st New York Volunteer Infantry, one of the most famous Civil War regiments, held a reunion in Oneonta. At that time veterans of the War between the States were about the same age as World War I veterans are today and several hundred former Union soldiers came to the city for the get together.

As the veterans read in the Star and other papers of the invasion of Belgium their minds must have gone back to the twenty-five battles in which their outfit was engaged. They must have thought of those awful twenty minutes at Salem Church when the regiment lost sixty per cent of its men and of that terrible day at Spottsylvania when it held the Bloody Angle and was cut to ribbons.

Several Oneontans were vacationing in Europe when hostilities started and there was concern as to their safety but all returned unharmed within a matter of weeks. A very slight taste of the devastation caused by war came one morning when a near cyclone felled hundreds of trees and lifted dozens of roofs while the accompanying cloudburst caused a flood of considerable proportions.

The newly built Country Club opened, with Lottie Scott in charge of the dining room. In the first tournament ever played on the then nine hole course, Eugene L. Ward won from Henry Buckley the cup which Ward himself had donated. The newly organized lodge of Elks held its first annual clambake at Cliffside on Goodyear Lake.

A group of girls spent a week at Camp Neversleep at Cold Spring on the Susquehanna. They were Eva Trauger, Ella Eggleston, Elizabeth Slawson, Elsie Potter, Mary Lauren, Alice Ford and Catherine Curtis. Mrs. Arthur M. Curtis and Miss Emily McNair were the chaperones.

The D.&H. railroad was booming. Twenty-one monster locomotives, among the largest in the country, were purchased for the Susquehanna Division. Ten of these steam giants would haul passenger trains while the remainder would be put on freight runs.

The Oneonta Sales Company had just received two car loads of new Fords and mechanics were busy assembling them. In those days autos came knocked down to conserve freight car space. The YMCA announced an excursion to Lake George that would cost \$1.75 a person, including a boat ride on the lake.

It was in the days before radio and TV and a concert by the Oneonta City Band drew 1,000 people to Ne-Ah-Wa Park (that was the way it was then written). People were having their last experience of gracious, unhurried, peaceful living.

## THE WILBER MANSION

It has been said that he who loves an old house never loves in vain and there are those in Oneonta who hold affection for the Wilber Mansion. It is not the most ancient dwelling in the city although it has been looking down Ford Avenue for four score years and ten. It lacks the freshness and charm of youth but it does have the serene beauty of an aged face.

It is loved, not so much for its physical attributes, but for what it represents, for the memories which it holds and for the part which it still plays in the life of this community.

The house was built by George I. Wilber in 1875, two years after he had come to Oneonta from Milford with his father, David Wilber. The private bank which David ran became the Wilber National Bank in 1874 with George I. as cashier. When constructed, the house had a flat roof. It was altered to its present form in the early 1890s when things Victorian were the rage. The Wilber house was considered a very elegant residence in those days.

George I. Wilber has been discussed several times in our column. Suffice it to say now that no man who ever lived in Oneonta did more for the community than this banker, industrialist and philanthropist. As a result of his generosity we have Wilber Park, the city water system, the First Methodist church and the big parking lot, as well as the Wilber Mansion.

When Mr. Wilber died in 1922 he left his home and other property on Ford Avenue and Dietz Street to the city, subject to the life use of his brother, D. F. Wilber, and his wife, and of the tenants of the other dwellings.

The brother passed away in 1928 and his widow in 1954, at which time title to the property passed to the city. It was decided by the Common Council to turn into a parking lot the other property on Dietz Street and Ford Avenue but to keep the Wilber home, carriage house and surrounding grounds as a memorial to the man who had done so much for Oneonta.

For a decade now the house has teemed with activity, all directed toward the betterment of the lives of our citizens. Thirteen civic organizations are headquartered here and a dozen others, including medical clinics, use it periodically. Here are the offices of the Red Cross and the Girl Scouts, of the Otsego County Health Association and the Family Service Association, as well as of the Cancer Society and Home Demonstration Unit No. 2.

Here meet the Oneonta Stamp Club, Alcoholics Anonymous, the Alateens and the Senior Citizens. The only Art Center in the city is maintained in the building. The carriage house is shared by the Oneonta Cooperative Nursery School and the Upper Susquehanna Historical Society, which has the only historical museum in the community.

None of these groups is organized for profit. Each exists to promote either the health, the recreation, the culture or the contentment of the people. Their work touches in some way every person living in Oneonta.

Look up Ford Avenue from Main Street and you will see the Wilber Mansion. There it stands, surrounded by its lawns, its trees and its shrubs, an oasis of beauty in a concrete desert.

## MYTHS AND LEGENDS

Every section of the country has its myths and legends which people persist in believing even when confronted with evidence that the stories cannot possibly be true. Let's take a look at some of the tales which enliven the history of Oneonta and its environs.

First there is the legend of the lost lead mine where in the olden days the Indians got the material for their bullets. This story is part of the folklore of several Otsego and Delaware communities. There will be at least one person who knows the story to be true because his great-great-great-grandfather was once taken to the spot blindfolded. This tale is persistent around Otego.

The truth of the matter is that the geology of this section forbids the existence of lead mines. Furthermore, lead never exists in a pure state, as do gold and silver, but is always found in combination with other elements. The two lead ores, lead sulphate and lead carbonate, are in white crystalline form and would not be recognized by an Indian.

Lead sulphite, or galena, the most common lead ore, resembles pure lead but the Indian had neither the equipment nor the knowledge to reduce the ore and obtain the usable metal.

It is true that boulders brought in by the glaciers and containing small veins of lead ore as well as traces of gold, silver and copper have been found hereabouts. In 1883 a group of Oneonta men sunk several thousand dollars in a supposed silver mine near the back road to Otego. What they had found was a glacial boulder containing minute amounts of silver. When the small vein thinned out to nothing, their dream of untold wealth was over.

Another perennial legend is that concerning the stone Emmons Mansion east of Oneonta, which many believe has a tunnel (which no one has ever seen) connecting it with the river. One story is that this provided an escape route in case the house was attacked by Indians or foreign troops. Actually there was danger from neither when the house was built by Ira Emmons in 1817.

Another tale has it that Emmons incurred the wrath of his neighbors because of his harsh treatment of his slaves and built the tunnel so that he could flee if his life was threatened. Emmons had no slaves, only a small colored boy whom he had brought from Baltimore as an indentured servant.

The story that the house was a station on the Underground Railroad by which slaves escaped from the South, is also without foundation. The local headquarters for the movement was the Ford Stone Mansion which stood where the Wilber Bank now is.

Another myth is that the name of our community was once Klipnockie. The hamlet was first known as McDonald's Bridge or McDonald's Mills. When the first postoffice was established in 1817 it officially became Milfordville and was so called until 1830 when it got the name of Oneonta. In the early days when it was a brawling frontier town it acquired the nickname of Clipnockie because in the tavern fights people were clipped and knocked. How the "C" got changed to "K" we do not know.

These are some of the legends about this section. They will continue to be believed, however, and that is all to the good since adults need fairy tales and fantasy in their mental diet as much as do children.



## THE CATSKILLS

When a visitor asks an Oneontan about the "mountains" which rim our valley to the south, he is generally told that they are the foothills of the Catskills. Neither geographically nor geologically is this correct. One must go beyond the Delaware river before he encounters the outlying ranges of the famous mountain group.

The Catskills lie principally in Greene and Ulster counties although their foothills push into Sullivan county and into Delaware. Unlike most mountain systems, the Catskills are compact, being encompassed in a rectangle extending fifty miles north and south and sixty from east to west.

James Fenimore Cooper and Washington Irving have immortalized the Catskills as a place of legend and romance. These famous authors succeeded admirably in interpreting the spirit of the region but there is no actual history to back up their romantic tales.

The Catskills were never Indian country. It is true that there were Indian trails through the mountains and that redskins hunted and fished there but no evidence exists that an Indian village ever stood in this wild section of the land.

As for the white man, it was two hundred years after the first settlements along the Hudson before he ventured into the mysterious wilderness except to trap, hunt and fish. Beauty was there but utility was not. And then suddenly, about 1817, the Catskills became commercially important.

Deep hemlock timber then covered these mountains. It grew almost solid on about every foot of ground from deepest gully to loftiest summit. The bark was needed for tanning and it was inevitable that men should come into the region and begin to fell the giant hemlocks and strip them of their bark.

Where only trails had existed, rough roads were built into every section of the mountains. Large quantities of bark were needed and since it was easier to bring the hides to the forest than to take the forest to the hides, tanneries were thrown together on every hand.

The years of the Civil War were the golden age of Catskill tanning. By 1870 the industry had disappeared. Eventually the prostrate hemlocks were hidden by second growth hard timber, largely sugar maple, ash and birch.

About every hollow in the Catskills has its abandoned quarry, for the bluestone industry was once an important one in these mountains. The "Sidewalks of New York" came for the most part from the Catskills, as did the stone for the Brooklyn Bridge. The industry languished when concrete came into use.

The first resort hotel in the mountains was the picturesque Catskill Mountain House high on the "Wall of Manitou" behind the village of Catskill. This hostelry was built in 1845 and before the Civil War was one of the most famous resorts in the country.

As more and better roads were built, hotels and boarding houses sprang up throughout the mountains and for years summer tourism was the region's biggest industry. Vacationers still flock into the Catskills during the hot months but not in the numbers they once did. The automobile, providing easy transportation to far places, has seen to that.

## NAMES ON THE LAND

Names on the land! Once, of course, the land, from coast to coast, stretched away without names. Nameless lakes reflected nameless mountains and nameless rivers flowed through nameless valleys. And then came man, tribe after tribe, and they gave names according to their thoughts.

The Indians gave descriptive names of flowing beauty—Oneonta, "the place of open rocks"; Unadilla, "the meeting place"; and Susquehanna, "the river of the long reaches". The white man used some of these names and of necessity added many of his own.

As the hamlet grew into a village and the village into a city, new streets appeared on every hand in Oneonta and each had to have a name. People were honored in some instances while in others the streets were named after distinguishing characteristics. Some names were arbitrarily chosen.

About every kind of temperate climate tree had a street named after it. There are Birch, Cedar, Cherry and Chestnut; Elm, Hazel and Hickory; Linden, Maple, Myrtle, Oak and Olive; Pine, Spruce, Thorn and Walnut.

Our numerical streets start with Third and continue through Eighth. Just what happened to First and Second your deponent sayeth not because he knoweth not and hasn't been able to findeth out.

We have East and West Streets in their proper places but North Street is west of East and South Street is in the northern part of the city. Exit Street leads out of one thoroughfare but enters another. There is a Della Avenue down in the Sixth Ward and Perry Mason fans are suggesting that it be re-named Della Street.

Several presidents of the United States have had streets named after them, including Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Jackson, Harrison, Pierce, Lincoln, Grant, Cleveland, Roosevelt, Taft and Wilson. It was Teddy Roosevelt, not FDR, who was so honored.

The names of some Oneonta pioneers are remembered in street names, among them Blanchard, Huntington, Baker, Ford, VanWoert, Scramling (with the name spelled wrong), and Walling. Some old settlers who have been neglected are Campbell, Lindsay, Saunders, McCrum, Blend, Vanderwerker, Bornt, Swart and McDonald.

There is a Hunt Street with two ends and no middle and an Ivy Court which is not a court. Irving Place is named after Irvin Doolittle. Factory Street has never known a factory. Some punster who wished to honor a once prominent family named a little lane in the Sixth Ward, Hem Street.

Near duplication of street names gives postal authorities the willies. There are Walling Boulevard and Walling Avenue, which are near each other. And then we have Reynolds Avenue and Reynolds Street, Lewis Avenue and Lewis Street and a Park Avenue and Street, just to mention a few couplets.

There are a couple of Water Streets and a brace of Wilson Avenues. East Center Street hasn't even a speaking acquaintance with Center Street and there is a South Sand Street with no Sand Street for it to be the south part of.

Our main thoroughfares turn so often that it is difficult for a stranger to orient himself. It might help to remember that Main Street from Third to Maple runs almost due east and west and Walling Avenue north and south.

## THE LOOMIS GANG

On a certain dark night in 1848 a horse was stolen from a barn near Otego and another from a stable in Hobart, over in Delaware; a farmer in Madison County lost his flock of geese and a tollgate in Schoharie was robbed.

These were not unrelated acts, as the widely separated points of occurrence might indicate, but were all the work of the infamous Loomis gang, which for three decades terrorized Madison, Oneida, Chenango, Otsego, Delaware and Schoharie counties. The nefarious exploits of the Loomis family and its widely scattered confederates have been immortalized in tales of fact and fiction and in countless folk lore anecdotes.

The founder of this dynasty of outlaws was George Washington Loomis, who came from Vermont to Madison County in 1802 and bought a farm on the Cherry Valley Turnpike (now Route 20) near Sangerfield. This adjoined the Nine Mile Swamp, a wild and mysterious tract of about five thousand acres.

Loomis was a good farmer and at first was well liked by his neighbors. In time he married Rhoda Mallet, an attractive and well educated girl who had been brought up in a criminal atmosphere since her father was a forger. The couple had ten children who lived to maturity: six strapping sons, William, Washington, Jr. (always called Wash), Grove, Wheeler, Amos Plumb (known as Plum), and Denio; and four beauteous daughters, Cornelia, Lucia, Mary and Harriet.

The children were taught to steal and to live by their wits. There were frequent guests and such as had no permanent abodes and were willing to indulge in criminal pursuits were urged to make the farm their home. Soon the big house was the headquarters of a considerable number of ruffians.

Petty larcenies soon developed into serious crimes. Homes, stores and tollgates were robbed. Horses, cattle and sheep were stolen and hidden in Nine Mile Swamp until they could be disposed of. The gang had agents in all the neighboring counties who joined in the raids and helped when trouble came.

For years the Loomis Gang kept the countryside in constant terror. Even the forces of law were intimidated. Members of the group were indicted innumerable times but rarely was anyone convicted since there was money available to hire the best legal talent. Those who opposed the outlaws had their homes and barns burned.

An aroused community finally took matters into its own hands. In December of 1848 a group of armed men surrounded the house and forced entrance. Quantities of loot were found and Wash, Grove and Wheeler were arrested and indicted. Wash jumped his bail and the cases against the other two were dropped.

The gang continued its activities and in time Wash returned. In 1864 another posse raided the farm and in this fight Wash was killed. The depredations continued, however, and indignation rose to fever pitch.

The end came on June 17, 1867, when several hundred vigilantes surrounded the house. The inmates surrendered and after huge quantities of stolen goods had been removed from the house and barns, every building on the place was put to the torch. The power of the Loomis Gang was at last broken.



## MUSIC, MUSIC, MUSIC !

Oneonta loves a parade; it always has and it probably always will. Of course a parade has no appeal unless there is the music of bands or drum corps and the community has been fortunate in the past. We speak of the past because it has been ten years since there has been a drum corps locally and longer than that since the last adult band marched by.

It is not a matter of record when the first band in the village was organized but it was well over a century ago. We know that in 1856 Christian Uebel, who got his musical training in Germany, was conducting a band and giving music lessons. Through the years since then there have been many bands composed of Oneonta musicians and called by one name or another.

There have been at least two bands unofficially connected with the local National Guard unit as well as Brown's Band, the City Band and Keeton's Band. It was the custom of these outfits to give weekly concerts during the summer from the grandstand at the corner of Main Street and Ford Avenue or in one of the parks.

In 1928 the American Legion organized a band with James Keeton as director. A committee appointed to look into the cost of uniforms exceeded its authority and the Legion soon found itself the possessor of \$1,600 worth of tailored horizon blue uniforms, black puttees, Sam Browne belts and silver helmets. It took the Post a long time to pay the bill.

This snappy outfit became well known in Central New York. When it disbanded about 1940 it was replaced by the Oneonta Military Band. Soon after World War II the VFW Band was organized. It was a good outfit but was short-lived. This was the last adult band in the city.

There is something about a drum corps which stirs the pulses and several crack outfits have kept local blood pressures high. The first organization of this type was the Star Fife and Drum Corps, organized in the 1890s and composed of young men under the direction of Charles Farmer, later to become a well known local attorney.

This corps disbanded soon after the turn of the century and the roll of drums was not heard again until 1925 when the VFW Fife, Drum and Bugle Corps was organized. This fine outfit, composed at first of adults only, won the state VFW championship twice. Later the age limit was lowered and some youths were taken in but without lowering the high standards.

In 1948 the American Legion Drum and Bugle Corps was organized by Joseph Irons. This outfit, an all veteran corps, paraded all over the state and won many prizes. It broke up in 1951.

In 1952 the Legion Post put together the famous Green Dragon Corps, composed mainly of youths but with a sprinkling of Legionnaires. There was a champion all girl color guard and a bevy of majorettes and guidon bearers.

This colorful group appeared in many parades, exhibitions and competitions and won its share of prizes. It went to the national American Legion convention in Washington in 1954 and participated in the big parade up Pennsylvania Avenue. The corps disbanded after the 1955 season.

## FOUR GREAT TEACHERS

There was a sense of change in the air as the students walked the corridors of Oneonta State Normal School on the opening day of 1933. Two beloved teachers, Arthur Curtis and Florence Matteson, were not in their accustomed places and the student teachers knew that at the Center Street training school there would be new faces behind the desks of Ellen Hitchcock and Mabelle Boynton.

Those four persons, whose combined years of teaching in the Oneonta Normal system totalled one hundred and thirty-four, had retired in June. Not only were they teachers of great skill but they were people whom it was a rare privilege to know. Fortunately for us, Miss Hitchcock was our first grade teacher and Miss Boynton our fifth and we had known Miss Matteson and Mr. Curtis from our childhood days.

Florence M. Matteson taught at State for forty years. Born in Morris, she graduated from the high school there and on her seventeenth birthday began teaching in a rural school. She entered Oneonta Normal on its opening day in 1889 and had the unusual experience of instructing for three years in the school where she was studying for her diploma.

Following graduation she taught for a year in Middletown and then returned to her Alma Mater as an assistant in the Primary Department. She later taught Latin and Algebra in the high school division and when that department was abolished in 1909 became head of the History Department.

Miss Matteson was also Dean of Women and as such enforced with great fairness the strict rules of conduct prescribed for the girls. To her the students turned with their problems, always to find a sympathetic listener and a true guide. She was also active in the community, especially in the work of the Episcopal Church, the Woman's Club and the DAR. Miss Matteson died in 1952.

Ellen Hitchcock, a native Oneontan, taught on Long Island for two years after graduating from ONS and then returned here as librarian of the Oneonta Public Library. She was a teacher at heart, however, and in 1904 took over the first grade in the Center Street School. When the Normal made Center Street a training school in 1906 she became a critic teacher and there she stayed for twenty-nine years, occupying the same room during all of that period.

Mabelle M. Boynton, a New Englander, graduated from Oneonta Normal and began teaching in Center Street in 1906. For twenty-seven years she taught the fifth grade and ended, as did Miss Hitchcock, by instructing the sons and daughters of former pupils. Miss Boynton lived for nearly thirty years after her retirement and was active in church and literary work. She died in 1962.

Arthur M. Curtis graduated from Cornell in 1889 as an architect. He never worked at that profession, however, except to design his own home in Oneonta. He came to ONS in 1895 as a teacher of mathematics and that was his life for thirty-eight years. We could say a great deal about Arthur Curtis but will not at this time since we intend to do a full story about him in the future. Suffice it to say now that he was a great teacher and a great gentleman. He died in 1951.

Horace Mann has said: "Teaching is the most difficult of all arts and the profoundest of all sciences." Few people ever mastered more completely this art and this science than Florence Matteson, Ellen Hitchcock, Mabelle Boynton and Arthur Curtis.

## MR. BASEBALL

They called him "Mr. Baseball" but it was more than devotion to the national pastime that made Charles Bowdish one of the most beloved citizens of his time. He was city chamberlain longer than any other man in Oneonta's history but it was not that fact but rather his intense zest for living and his keen interest in every phase of the life of his city that made him an outstanding figure.

Charles Hemstreet Bowdish was born in 1864 in Charleston Four Corners, Madison County. He attended the local schools and at the age of eighteen became a clerk in a general store at Colliers. One day in 1884 George I. Wilber, the Croesus of Oneonta, visited the store and was impressed by the friendliness and industry of the young clerk and offered him a job in the Wilber National Bank.

The youth accepted the offer and moved to Oneonta. The wages were small but he started an interest account and put aside a little each week. By 1892 he had saved enough to go into the cigar making business with James Hayes. For years the firm of Hayes and Bowdish occupied rooms in the block on Chestnut Street now owned by the Oddfellows.

In 1913 Mr. Bowdish sold his interest in the company and was appointed city chamberlain to fill out the unexpired term of Charles J. Beams, who had been named postmaster. Fourteen consecutive elective terms followed.

In January of 1940 Mr. Bowdish, together with Donald H. Grant, Daniel Franklin and Dorr S. Hickey, bought the Cornwall, Ontario, franchise in the Canadian-American League, bringing organized baseball to Oneonta for the first time since 1924, when the New York-Pennsylvania League had a team here briefly.

The Oneonta Sports Association was organized and Mr. Bowdish became its treasurer, a position which he was to hold until his death. He was much more than just the keeper of the wampum belt. If a player had a personal problem, he went to Charlie Bowdish for advice; if a little cash was needed until payday, Charlie would always oblige.

In 1941 he made a decision. He had been city chamberlain over twenty-eight years and he deemed that long enough. Furthermore, at that late stage of life he couldn't let business interfere with pleasure, so he resigned as chamberlain, effective January 1, 1942, and henceforth gave his full time to his beloved game.

He rarely missed a home game and when the team pulled out for Quebec or Rome or Pittsfield he was pretty apt to be on the bus or in a following car. On the evening of June 5, 1950, a "Charlie Bowdish Night" was held at Neahwa Park and he was suitably honored. Congratulatory messages came from baseball players and executives all over the land.

Mr. Bowdish was deeply interested in the United Commercial Travelers and worked his way up to the post of Grand Counsellor of New York State. He was a fifty year Mason and an honorary life member of the Elks.

He was married in 1895 to Carrie Whyte and they spent fifty-eight years together, mostly at 39 Ford Avenue. She died in 1953.

The game ended for Charlie Bowdish on May 18, 1956, in his ninety-second year. He lies in Glenwood Cemetery in the city which he loved and which loved him.



## THE SPIRIT ARMY

The sun had not yet pierced the early morning mist and the dew was still on the grass as an erect old gentleman strode briskly up the drive and into Riverside Cemetery. He gave a cheery good morning to a caretaker near the road but the latter did not look up from his work. He passed through a family decorating the graves of their dead but not even the children gave him heed.

Once the Judge had been commander of the local post of the Grand Army of the Republic but that had been decades ago. For some years, however, it had fallen to his lot to conduct the annual meetings on Memorial Day of that great Spirit Army whose footfalls cause no sound.

As he made his way to the shaft honoring the memory of those who had fallen in the bloody battles of the Rebellion he could see his comrades gathering around him. Some were already there while others came from Calvary and St. Mary's, from Glenwood and the Plains, from Hog's Back and Cook's.

Soon their ranks numbered nearly eight hundred. Some were young, some middle-aged, while others bore the infirmities of the very old. Nearly a hundred who had died in battle wore uniforms of blue, khaki or marine green.

As his eyes scanned the assemblage the Judge could see over by the fence a small group of men who had fought to create the country before ever there was an Oneonta. Nearby were two or three who had answered their country's call in 1812.

Scattered through the crowd were many who had worn the Union blue. The Judge could see men who had been behind the stonewall atop Cemetery Ridge at Gettysburg when Pickett made his charge; who had held the Bloody Angle at Spottsylvania; who had been at Antietam and Chancellorsville; who had fought in the flaming hell of the Wilderness and had been at Appomattox when the stillness came.

He could see comrades who in 1898 had been with the colors in Cuba, Hawaii and the Philippines. More numerous were the doughboys of '17, men who had looked upon the sun for the last time as they advanced through the wheat at Chateau Thierry; who had smashed the Hindenburg Line on that awful September morning, and who had fought through the booby-trapped forests of the Argonne.

The largest group had served in World War II. Here could be seen men who had sailed the seven seas and had flown over every continent. Here were those who had fought in every corner of the globe. They had been at Kasserine Pass and on Anzio, in Normandy and at Nuremberg; at Pearl Harbor, in the Solomons and on Saipan and Okinawa. And then there were a fewer number to whom Pork Chop Hill, Seoul and Choisan Reservoir were familiar names.

The ceremonies ended, the Judge spoke briefly: "Many of us," he said, "can recall when Memorial Day was a holy day, observed reverently by every veteran and by most townspeople. Today it is just another holiday.

"As I speak, a few members of veteran organizations are preparing for a parade and exercises. A few citizens, attracted by the pageantry, will watch the parade. Most of your sons and grandsons, however, will be on the golf course or the picnic grounds, entirely forgetful of what the day means. The world has little noted nor long remembered what we did."

The sound of musketry, unheard by the birds above, was followed by the thrilling notes of "Taps". The crowd melted away as invisibly and as soundlessly as it had gathered. It would be a year before the Spirit Army would meet again but in the meantime its recruiter, the Grim Reaper, would be hard at work.

## A NORMAL JANUARY

Things were pretty quiet in Oneonta during the night on which 1907 ended and 1908 began. At midnight some of the D.&H. yard engineers blasted their whistles for a half minute or more but that was the only unusual noise. The sound of revelry by night that characterizes New Year's Eve in the present era was entirely absent.

It was not that Oneonta was a dry town, for most certainly it wasn't. There were a half dozen saloons in the village as well as ten hotels, each of which had a bar. However, drinking habits were different in that day than they are now. Women were rarely seen in bars and elaborate New Year's Eve parties such as are held today were virtually unknown outside of the big cities a half century and more ago.

Mild weather ushered in the year of 1908. There had been a lot of snow early in December but a thunderstorm on the 23rd had assured a green Christmas. Holiday business had been good and the merchants were well satisfied, even though there was the perennial problem of gift exchanges.

All records had been broken at the postoffice when \$290 worth of stamps were sold in one day. This included 7,000 of the one cent variety for use on the Christmas postcards which were then in vogue. In 1964 the office averaged \$1,400 a day in stamp sales during the week or so before Christmas.

A public hearing was held in the YMCA on the proposed city charter. It was hoped that the state legislature would act so that Oneonta village could become a city on March 1, 1908, but it would be January 1, 1909, before the charter went into effect. The document as proposed contained provision for six supervisors, one from each ward, but that arrangement was scrapped somewhere along the line.

The national election to be held in November was attracting attention and the YMCA Senate, a discussion group of young business and professional men, held a straw vote as to its choice among the candidates being proposed for president. William Howard Taft had fourteen votes, Charles Evans Hughes seven, George I. Wilber six, Theodore Roosevelt one and William Jennings Bryan one. Mr. Wilber subsequently declared his unavailability for the position.

Boilers were being installed in the new high school building on Academy Street and it was announced that the structure would be ready for occupancy in September. Meanwhile, high school classes were being held in the YMCA and the grades were being taken care of in the State Armory.

Congressman George W. Fairchild had just introduced a bill appropriating \$100,000 for a federal building in Oneonta. The bill passed but it would be 1915 before the building was ready for use.

There was a round of dances and parties given for students home from college for the holidays. Among them were Barton Lane, Ira Place and Horace Ritter from Cornell; Albert Getman, Hamilton; Gertrude Whyte, Pratt Institute; Maude Miller and Harold Ford, Syracuse; John Carson, Columbia; and Lee VanWoert, Amherst.

It was a normal holiday season in a normal year before World War I turned the globe upside down.



## PROHIBITION DAYS

Strong drink has been a curse of mankind ever since the power of the grape and the grain to exhilarate (and confuse) was first discovered, probably by accident. Since the desire, and thereby the ability, to control his appetite lies solely within each man, the efforts of society to solve the problem of drinking have not been notably successful.

The greatest effort was National Prohibition which, from 1920 to 1934, put traffic in liquor, and hence drinking itself, beyond the pale of law and order. Let's take a small look at Oneonta before and during the Noble Experiment.

In pioneer days about the first public building in any community was a tavern and Oneonta had three before ever a church was erected. Through the intervening years there have been countless places where strong drink could be procured.

During the decade before Prohibition there were such places as Morton's Cafe and Martin's and Dell Kohn's saloons. Every hotel had its bar. These establishments were frequented mostly by working men, the middle and upper strata doing their drinking at home or in the gentility of a hotel dining room.

The saloon was the poor man's club. Here he found sociability and entertainment and a release from his frustrations. It was a male sanctuary. There might be a lady of the evening or two in the back room but no female except Carrie Nation (and she was most unwelcome), ever invaded the saloon proper. As a matter of fact a woman was rarely seen drinking in any public place. If a teenager entered a saloon, he came right back out through the swinging doors at almost the speed of light.

There were no "alcoholics" in those days, just drunks, boozers and bums and no intelligent effort was made to help them. Our observation was that there was no drinking problem among teenagers. Probably there was some drinking among youths but we saw little of it.

Then came Prohibition and the picture changed. The drinking base broadened considerably and many a man and woman of our generation who had never touched the stuff when it could be bought legally, tasted of the fruit once it was forbidden.

Before Prohibition if a member appeared at an Oneonta Club dance with liquor on his breath, he was haled before the Board of Governors and reprimanded. During the '20s there were probably few dancers who had not been to an early evening cocktail party. As for the Country Club, that gurgle you heard out in the darkness was not the music of Otego Creek as it rippled over the stones but the sound of bathtub gin rushing down parched throats.

There were bootleggers in Oneonta to be sure and a few blind tigers where, upon Charley's recommendation, you could have liquor served to you in a coffee cup. Many people, with the help of a friendly physician, bought their spirits at a drugstore or made their own gin of prescription alcohol and water, flavored with the essential oil soaked out of orange rind.

Prohibition days in Oneonta were neither better nor worse than they were in other towns in the country of its size and character. Lawlessness was not rampant in our city nor could it be noticed that the cause of temperance had been advanced. The experiment of national prohibition was noble in concept but from it came no solution of the drinking problem.



## TOMMY WILLAHAN

Tommy Willahan—what memories that name evokes!, memories not only of the diminutive, kindly man himself but also thoughts of the bakeshop he ran, a place of tantalizing sights and sounds and smells.

The hired girl (that's a term which is heard no more) did the ordinary baking but when something unusual, such as jelly doughnuts or lady's-fingers or perhaps special bread, was desired, your mother sent you to Willahan's with the order, and you didn't mind going, for Tommy (Mr. Willahan to us) would probably slip you a delicacy or two.

When we were a lad Tommy Willahan was an institution in Oneonta, as was the bakery which he conducted for over thirty years. As our mind goes back in memory, another figure emerges—David VanSchaick, Mr. Willahan's wife's cousin and the baker's constant companion. Both were physically small in stature and quite a pair they were—the kindly Irishman and the gentle Dutchman.

Thomas Willahan was born in 1844 in a small village near Londonderry in County Tyrone, Ireland. His family were weavers by occupation and while yet a boy he worked in the linen mills. In 1864 he migrated to America, the voyage in a sailing vessel taking forty-seven days. When he reached Rochester, where a brother was working, his worldly wealth consisted of three cents, which he spent on a letter to his folks telling them of his safe arrival in the land of promise.

He learned the baker's trade in Rochester and after spending a few years there came to Oneonta. He was first employed by Harvey Bissell and then by E. C. Bundy. In 1878 he engaged in business for himself, his first shop being in the basement of the Saunders block where the barbershop now is. After two years there he moved to a wooden building on Main Street on the site of Brackett's. In 1881 he purchased the wooden building next east and moved thereto.

The bakery and the adjacent structures were destroyed in the big fire later that year and he built on the lot the brick block which still bears his name. He was in business there until September 21, 1907, when he retired, closing out the bakery and leasing the store to the newly formed Citizens National Bank. After that institution took over the defunct First National Bank and moved to the Hotel Oneonta block in 1911, the store was occupied for some years by A. O. Ingerham, who ran a news and tobacco establishment. Rudolph's is there now.

For fifty-four years Mr. Willahan was a devoted member of the First Methodist Church, contributing liberally to its support and rarely missing a church service. His life was of singular uprightness and his association with his fellows was characterized by unusual kindness of deed and word.

Thomas Willahan married Emma G. King of Oneonta in 1873. Her father had once owned the farm where the Country Club is now. He sold it to Stephen Bull in the early 1870s. For nearly a half century the Willahans lived in a brick house which he built and which is now the apartment dwelling at 15 Grand Street.

"Lovely and pleasant in their lives, in death they were not divided," are words found in II Samuel relative to Saul and Jonathan but they could be applied equally to Thomas and Emma Willahan. They died within a few hours of each other on March 14, 1923.

## THE EARLIEST SETTLERS

The white man had traveled many miles from his home in Europe before he reached this pleasant valley and the trek had taken many years, but the red man whom he found here had come a much greater distance and his journey was over an infinitely longer period of time.

There is no proof that the European visited these lands before 1600 whereas ample evidence exists that the Indian roamed these hills and valleys at least four thousand years ago. He had come from Asia over the land bridge where now is Bering Strait perhaps fifty thousand years ago but it took him several milleniums to reach what is now New York State.

Most of the artifacts found hereabouts are Algonquin, a term applied to many Indian stone age cultures. These tribes were followed by the Iroquois, a people about whom we have considerable knowledge since they were here when the white man came. The Iroquois lived for centuries in eastern Canada and started their migration into New York probably about the middle of the 16th century.

By 1600 the original tribes of the Iroquois Confederation—the Mohawks, Oneidas, Senecas, Onondagas and Cayugas—were firmly established in the Mohawk Valley and along the upper reaches of the Susquehanna. The eastern door was held by the Mohawks and the western by the Senecas while the Onondagas tended the council fires in their "castle" near Syracuse. South of these "elder brethren" were the two younger tribes, the Oneidas, who were related to the Mohawks, and the Cayugas, who had sprung from the Senecas.

The middle and lower sections of the Susquehanna watershed, from just west of the Chenango River to Chesapeake Bay, were held by the Susquehannocks, distant cousins of the Iroquois. The latter put constant pressure on their kinfolk and drove them ever southward.

By the time of the ascendancy of the Iroquois, the nearest Algonquin people were the Delawares, on the river of that name, the principal group being the Minsis, located below the confluence of the east and west branches of the stream. North and east of them were the Mohicans, who occupied both sides of the Hudson from Saratoga to below the Catskills. South of the Mohicans were the Esopus Indians, with whom the Dutch fought half a century later.

These Algonquin peoples—the Delawares, Mohicans and Esopus—were perhaps as closely related as were the Mohawks, Senecas and Onondagas. The Pequots of Connecticut were probably a branch of the Mohicans, who were also related to the Manhattan and Long Island Indians, as well as to the Narragansets and all the other New England tribes.

Farther south in the Carolinas dwelt two other tribes of Iroquois stock, the Tuscaroras and the Cherokees. Later a war-torn remnant of the Tuscaroras fled north to take asylum with the Iroquois, who accepted them as the sixth member of the Confederation.

We think of this as the New World but there was a civilization here as early as any on the European continent. Early America could not boast of the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome but the Iroquois carried his arms farther than did Rome at the height of its power and the first white settlers found something here which they had craved but had never experienced—a democratic form of government, devised and practiced by the Six Nations.

## THE GOOD MENDELS

It was a unique affair. Only once before (and never since) in the long history of Oneonta Masonic Lodge had a public installation of officers been held but it was not this fact alone that made the occasion memorable. What made the investiture held on the evening of January 2, 1892, unusual was that after the ceremonies, which were held in the Metropolitan Theatre on Dietz Street where the lower level of Huntington Park now is, Samuel Mendel, father of the new master, Abraham L. Mendel, paid the entire bill for a banquet at the Central Hotel for over 300 Masons and their guests.

The father was very proud of his son and well he might be for Abe Mendel was one of the best liked men who ever lived in Oneonta. It should be added that the son was equally proud of his father. Samuel Mendel, during a half century of life in Oneonta, earned the love and respect of all.

The Mendels, who were the first persons of the Jewish faith to make Oneonta their permanent home, were a remarkable family. Andrew and Samuel Mendel came to America in 1849 from their native Germany. Landing in New York, they headed upstate immediately. For some years they peddled notions through Otsego, Delaware, Ulster and Sullivan counties, at first on foot and then by horse and buggy in the style of such Yankee peddlers as Solon and Collis P. Huntington and, many years later, Frank H. Bresee.

Their brothers, Benedict and Herman, soon joined them, and about 1856 the four men started a general store in Otego. Believing that the proposed Albany and Susquehanna Railroad was certain to be built and that its coming to Oneonta would be the making of that community, they closed the Otego store in 1860 and came here, opening a general store in a wooden building owned by Isaac Peters on the south side of Main Street below Chestnut.

In 1862 a branch was opened in Delhi and wholesale businesses were later established in New York City and in Peekskill. The four were partners in all of these ventures but a different brother ran each one. Samuel had the Oneonta store, Benedict the Delhi branch and Andrew the New York place while Herman ran the Peekskill wholesale house.

The business of the Oneonta store increased rapidly and in 1863 the stone building which had housed the famous firm of Solon and Collis P. Huntington was purchased. This stood on the site of the Turner Restaurant. A large wooden addition was put on the rear and other improvements were made.

Samuel Mendel lived for years in the house on Main Street just beyond the junkyard at the foot of the viaduct. This locality was the best residential section of the village at one time and the Mendel home was a showplace.

Mr. Mendel joined the Masonic Lodge in 1866 and his son Abraham, who was born in the Main Street house in 1865, petitioned the Lodge as soon as he was of age. He advanced through the chairs and became master in 1892 as has been related.

The store was closed in 1896, Samuel Mendel retiring and his son moving to New York, where he died in 1900. The father passed away in 1914. Both men had left their mark for good upon the community.



## FRITTS THE WIZARD

Some day in the not too distant future you will be able to see the image of the person with whom you are conversing on the telephone. The device already has limited use in a few of the largest cities.

Before you start rhapsodizing about the creative genius of present day scientists, it might be well to consider the fact that the groundwork for the TV telephone was laid eighty-five years ago by a native Oneontan, Charles E. Fritts, a most remarkable scientist although practically unknown today.

Fritts early saw the possibilities in selenium, an element which will conduct an electric current in proportion to the amount of light falling on it, and he made many improvements in the mechanism of the selenium cell. It was his ambition to make one so sensitive that the image of a person on one end of a telephone wire could be seen by the person at the other end. He did not fully succeed but he accomplished the fundamental research which guided telephone engineers three-quarters of a century later.

As early as 1880 Fritts saw with extraordinary clearness the possibility and the practical implications of interchanging the waves of light, sound and electricity and he built workable inventions based upon his theories.

In our first story over five years ago we sketched the life of this crippled genius who was born in 1838 in a house which stood where the dentists' building now is on Chestnut Street, and who spent much of his life here. We told how he was first a teacher of the classics and then a watchmaker, later going to New York where most of his scientific work was done.

The most important of his inventions was an apparatus for photographing sound. He made the voice vibrate a disc like a telephone diaphragm. The movements of the diaphragm varied the amount of light admitted through a tiny slit into a black box. This varying light coming through the slit was photographed on a roll of sensitized paper which was moved past the slit like the film in a movie camera. He used paper because photographic film had not yet been invented.

This recorded sound could be transmitted electrically and then played back as the original sound. Fritts applied for a patent in 1882 but no one in the Patent Office could even dream of any practical application of the device and the patent was not granted until 1916, after the inventor had been dead eleven years.

The patent was one of the broadest ever given to any inventor. When talking motion pictures were conceived Fritts' ideas had to be used since they were basic in recording sound by electrical means. In them were also the seeds of many developments in television, such as the TV tape.

The patent was bought from the inventor's heirs by the Victor Talking Machine Company and was subsequently transferred to RCA-Photophone, pioneer maker of talking motion picture equipment.

Thus did an Oneonta boy lay the foundation for a great modern art and industry but Charles Edgar Fritts profited not at all. When he died in 1905 he was a lonely, poverty stricken paralytic, driven from one rooming house to another, hungry most of the time but always dreaming of the day when wealth and honor would come to him.

## AN HOSPITABLE SPOT

It would be interesting to know how many travelers have spent the night and enjoyed hospitality in the two hotels which have stood on Main Street facing Broad. For ninety years a hostelry has been on the site, providing a home-away-from-home for the sojourners in our midst.

There was never a building on the land where Dietz Street meets Main. For many years after the founding of the community there was not even a lane or a walk between the Turner McCall house on the western corner and the DeWitt Ford home on Main directly opposite what is now Broad Street.

In 1853 Jacob Dietz, a prominent merchant and farmer, opened a thoroughfare through his farm land. It was first called Shanghai Street because a resident owned a number of roosters of that breed but the name was soon changed to Dietz. At first the street extended only to Silver Creek but before 1860 it was pushed through to Center.

Soon after Dietz was opened a two story frame building was erected near the east corner. The first floor was used by John F. Perkins as a marble shop. On the second floor the present Masonic Lodge was organized in 1859. It occupied the quarters (at an annual rental of thirty dollars) until 1865, when the building was moved across Main Street next to the E. R. Ford stone store and fitted up as N. I. Ford's drugstore. It was destroyed in the big fire of 1881.

West of the marble shop and opposite Broad was the residence of DeWitt Ford, built about 1820 by Roderick Emmons. This was later moved back to Dietz Street and was enlarged to become the Russell Conservatory of Music.

In 1873 Alfred C. Lewis purchased the property and erected a large brick hotel on the eastern end of the site, extending it two years later to Dietz. There were three stores in the west portion while the famed Central Hotel occupied the ground floor to the east and all of the upper stories.

The Wilber National Bank occupied the corner store until 1905 when it moved to its new block at the corner of Main and South Main Streets. It was replaced in the hotel block by the First National Bank.

The center store was the postoffice from 1881 until 1890 under postmasters Carey B. Pepper, Hartford D. Nelson, Harlow E. Bundy and Charles D. Shelland. It was here that the Bundy time recorder, the keystone in the IBM arch, was first tried out. This store was later occupied by Herrieff's Clothes Shop.

The third store was first occupied by the men's furnishing store of W. A. E. Tompkins and later by William Holloway, shoe dealer, and by the National Express office.

The Central Hotel was opened in 1873 by Lewis and Allen, who were followed by a succession of proprietors. It became one of the best known hostelries in upstate New York and much of Oneonta's social life centered about its big dining room where innumerable banquets and parties were held. The hotel burned early in the morning of January 16, 1910, with the loss of three lives, an employee and two guests. L. C. Millard and son, Jesse, ran the place at the time.

## A LONG SHADOW

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said that an institution is the lengthened shadow of one man. Joseph T. Gilbert had his day in the sun a century and more ago and the shadow which he cast is the pleasant village of Gilbertsville.

It was his father, Abijah Gilbert, who was the first settler in that part of the Butternut Valley and founded the village but Joseph was the man who built upon the foundation and who made the hamlet a thriving center of trade.

Abijah Gilbert, born in 1747, came to America from England in 1786, leaving his family behind. He had money to invest and he bought of Lewis and Richard Morris a thousand acres of their patent in the Butternut valley.

In 1787 he visited his lands, began to clear them and built a log cabin near the present golf course. In the fall of that year he returned to England and came back the next spring with his wife and children. He then erected a frame house and a sawmill and gristmill.

Joseph T. Gilbert, born in England in 1783, was the fourth of five children of the pioneer. Part of his boyhood was spent in Schenectady, where his father had business interests.

The history of the village during the first quarter of the last century is largely the story of the business enterprise of Gilbert and his brother-in-law, Samuel Cotton. They had gristmills and sawmills, a distillery, a tannery and a hat factory, as well as blacksmith shops, stores and a linseed oil mill.

They owned many farms and were extensive traders, sending their teams far and wide. Gilbert was the more aggressive and it was his enterprise and labor that made Gilbertsville the principal trade center for a wide area.

Joseph Gilbert was the commanding figure in the little community. His physical vigor, his mental prowess, his ambition and industry and his deep moral sense made him a natural leader. In early manhood he was converted by an itinerant evangelist and demonstrated his faith by closing his distillery and pouring the liquor into the street.

In 1803 he married Hannah Thorp, daughter of another pioneer, and by her he had fifteen children, eleven of them living to maturity. She died in 1830 and he took Caroline Chapman as his second wife. She gave him three children.

About 1820 he erected a fine stone house where Major's Inn later stood. As his nine sons came of age he offered each the choice of a college education or money enough to go into business. One who preferred business was James L. Gilbert, known as "The Major" because of his rank in the militia.

In 1895 the family homestead burned in the great fire which also destroyed the big Stag's Head Inn across the road. Upon the site James Gilbert erected the picturesque hostelry known as Major's Inn. For years this place was widely known for its beauty and for the quality of its food.

The property passed out of the hands of the Gilberts in 1926 and since then has had several owners. It has been closed for some years. In 1962 Henry L. Gilbert of Cambridge, Massachusetts, a member of the clan, acquired possession and deeded the property to the Village Improvement Society of Gilbertsville.



## QUITE A BLAZE

The Colonel Snow steam pumper, the A. L. Kellogg Hook and Ladder truck and the Wilber Hose wagon had already rolled but the men of the Lewis Chemical Company were still at the fire house. The horses which drew the truck were quartered in the Camp livery stable on Broad Street but this was the building in flames and a hurry call had been sent to the Coy stables for a relief team.

Suddenly there was the sound of hoofbeats and two badly frightened and somewhat scorched horses dashed into the old wooden fire house which stood where the Municipal Building is now. The animals had somehow managed to escape from the burning stable and, hearing the alarm, had made their way to the fire station as had been their custom—under human guidance in the past.

The fire, which occurred on the evening of June 1, 1905, was one of Oneonta's worst blazes, destroying two wooden buildings and a brick veneer structure. Much damage was done to nearby buildings and only hard work by five volunteer companies under the direction of Chief Frank Monroe prevented a holocaust.

The area involved was on the west side of Broad Street, extending from the Doyle and Smith cigar factory, now occupied by the Cross Supply Company, to the old Star building now used by Bern Furniture. Next to Doyle and Smith was the Niles block, a brick veneer job which housed the Oneonta Grocery Company, the Oneonta Candy Company and Lyon's Glove Store. Next north was the big wooden livery stable operated by Seymour Camp and then came a frame building owned by Mrs. O. G. Richmond and occupied by the Smith harness and wagon shop.

The blaze started at about 10:45 p.m. in the livery stable and spread rapidly because of the large quantity of hay in the old structure. The wagon shop to the north was soon on fire. The Niles block, with a brick exterior, might have survived but an explosion in the paint and varnish shop connected with the stable sprayed the block with blazing pieces of wood.

Several horses escaped through a rear door but eighteen animals were trapped in their stalls and perished. The Grocery Company was able to remove part of its stock from the Niles block but the glove store, the candy company and the wagon works suffered almost total losses.

The Doyle and Smith building, a solid brick structure, did not burn but there was heavy smoke and water damage to the large stock of tobacco. At that time the cigar company employed about one hundred and fifty men and women, who rolled approximately ten million cigars a year.

The buildings were soon replaced. The present Enders block was built the next year and its first tenant was the Happy Hour movie theatre, the second nickelodeon in town. Edward H. Pardee, a nephew of Collis P. Huntington, bought the lot next north and built the present block in 1906. Mr. Camp erected the other building on the site the same year. He moved the livery stable to the barn back of his Grand Street residence.

The Oneonta Grocery Company started immediately to build its present quarters at the corner of Broad and Market on land once occupied by a plow factory, a machine shop and a foundry.

## *J. FENIMORE COOPER*

One summer's afternoon in 1840 while James Fenimore Cooper was driving to his village home from his Chalet farm on the east side of Otsego Lake, he stopped the horse as a clearing in the woods revealed a charming view of the lake. After gazing for a few minutes at the water he turned to his daughter beside him and remarked, "I must write one more book, dearie, about our little lake."

After a few more moments of reflection he resumed the journey. Within the hour he had secluded himself in the library of Cooper Hall and had begun to write "The Deerslayer", his best known novel.

James Fenimore Cooper was born in Burlington, N. J., in 1789 and was but a babe in arms when he was brought by his parents to the little settlement at the foot of Otsego Lake which the father, Judge William Cooper, had founded and which would bear the family name. At the age of nine he was sent to Albany to be tutored by the rector of St. Peter's Episcopal Church.

After a career at Yale and in the Navy, he was married in 1811 to Susan DeLancey and made Cooperstown a stop on his honeymoon tour. In 1914 the Coopers returned to the village and took up residence at Fenimore House, which stood on the site of the present New York State Historical Association building and museum.

After three years of farming the novelist left Cooperstown, not to return until 1834. By that time he had spent seven years in Europe and had become an author of international fame. Then forty-five years of age, he decided to settle down in his boyhood home. He repaired and remodeled Otsego Hall, the big mansion which his father had built on the site where now stands the Salvatore statue of the novelist.

By 1826 when Cooper began his residence in Europe, he had become the best known and most widely read of American authors. His books appeared simultaneously in the United States, England and France and were translated into German, Italian and other tongues.

When the writer returned to his native land his heart was sore. He had found that Europeans had a low opinion of American culture and, passionate patriot that he was, he had tried to amend matters by writing novels whose object was to demonstrate the superiority of democratic institutions over the medieval legacies of Europe. This only aroused resentment abroad.

America was in an awkward stage of growth when Cooper returned and he began to criticize certain aspects of the country's life and manners. Soon a torrent of newspaper abuse fell upon him. The storm increased with the Three Mile Point incident which we related in another story. This gave rise to his unfortunate book, "Home as Found", to more bitter quarrels and to a long series of libel suits, all of which he won.

For a time Cooper was cordially detested even in his home village but he went the even tenor of his ways, turning out in this period his valuable "Naval History" and ten novels. He also continued his interest in Christ Episcopal Church, planning and supervising extensive alterations.

James Fenimore Cooper, his place in history secure despite all the bickering, died in 1851 and was buried in Christ Churchyard. His grave is visited by thousands of tourists annually.

## THE OLDEST HOUSE

In its youth it was a fine example of the salt box type of home architecture so common in old New England but age has blurred its lines. Its frame is as sturdy as when Lawrence Swart fashioned it in 1807 from hand hewn hill pine but nearly one hundred and sixty years have taken their toll and it sits today in a grove of magnificent maples like an old man dreaming his life away, pride gone and usefulness ended.

The home of Merton Wilcox at the end of Wilcox Avenue and on the edge of the site of the new Riverview School is, we are certain, the oldest structure within the limits of Oneonta. For years we had considered the McDonald house at the corner of Main and River, which was razed in 1962, to be the most ancient building. We knew of the Wilcox house but were unable to verify its age.

We have been investigating and, although there is no positive proof, all the evidence points to the fact that it was built in 1807 when the entire area between the river and the bluff upon which most of the city stands was a dense forest of virgin hemlock, with only a few small clearings.

In 1795 Lawrence Swart, of German Palatinate stock, came from the Mohawk Valley and acquired a tract of land between the river and what is now River Street. He made a clearing in the woods and erected a log cabin in which he and his wife, who had been Anna Lamb, lived until 1807 when he built the house which is now the Wilcox home. By that time the McDonald sawmill was in operation and cut boards could be obtained.

In 1829 Peter Collier and Jared Goodyear bought the McDonald complex of mills and the Swart land holdings. In 1867 Henry Wilcox came to Oneonta from Harpersfield to enter the lumber business as a partner of Goodyear. He purchased the Swart farm from Goodyear and moved into the house in 1868.

We had a talk recently with Merton Wilcox, Henry's son and the present owner of the property. This very pleasant old gentleman told us that the house was so old when his father acquired it that re-siding was necessary.

The Wilcox farm was cleared and made productive through the years. Such thoroughfares as London, Burnside and Wilcox Avenues were cut through it. A beautiful grove of stately trees near the river was retained and for years Wilcox Grove was a popular place for picnics and out-door church services. Also called the "Leafy Temple", it once had walks and drives and a clearing provided with benches which could seat a thousand persons. The relocated Route 7 will cut directly through this grove.

Wilcox Flats, as the whole area has been known for years, has been the traditional place for circuses and carnivals. All of the big outdoor shows, such as Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey, Forepaugh, Sells-Floto, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and its rival, Pawnee Bill, have pitched their tents there.

The Wilcox house once stood in a wilderness with the log road which is now Main Street the nearest thoroughfare. River Street was yet to be pushed through the forest. When the Riverview School is finished the ancient dwelling will be nearly surrounded by the trappings of civilization. A long era is ending.



## ANTI-RENT WAR

It seemed passing strange to the teen-age boy that the two men who came to his father's home in the Kortright hills that August night in 1845 slept in the corn-field instead of in the house. One was his uncle but who was the other? Why did they leave so early the next morning?

Later he was to learn that the stranger was Warren Scudder, the leader of the Delaware County Anti-Rent "Indians" and that both men, together with some three hundred other respected citizens, were wanted for murder.

Early that day an armed posse, including Deputy Sheriff Osman Steele, had gone to the farm of Moses Earl on Dingle Hill near Andes to seize his cattle to satisfy one of the infamous "rent" payments. Gathered there were about three hundred embattled farmers, determined that there would be no levy. In the ensuing fracas, "lead penetrated Steele" and the unpopular deputy was killed.

It was a shot heard 'round the state. Governor Silas Wright declared the county to be in a state of insurrection and sent in three regiments of militia to help track down the so-called Indians.

Many times have we heard the story of the Anti-Rent War from our maternal grandfather (the boy mentioned above), and from the paternal counterpart, whose uncle, Green Moore, was high sheriff of the county and who was also a kinsman of Warren Scudder, the "Rob Roy of the Catskills". It was a stirring tale.

The trouble arose from the baronial system then in effect. Most of the land had been held by absentee patroons. When they sold land to a settler they were allowed by law to include a provision in the contract calling for the perpetual payment of "rent", in the form of money, produce or labor.

Organized resistance to the system began in 1839 in Albany County. The movement spread to Columbia and Delaware and bands of "Indians" were organized in each township. Farmers would refuse to pay and when the authorities tried to seize the property and sell it, the "Indians" would go into action.

Things came to a climax on August 7, 1845, at the Andes farm. Here the law met some three hundred determined men, costumed and masked. It would appear that the posse fired first, wounding an "Indian". Scudder then gave an order to shoot the horses which the officers were riding. One shot went high and Steele was mortally wounded.

The "Indians" scattered and hid in hay mows, in caves and in the deep woods. While crops were untended the hunt went on for weeks and eventually over two hundred men were captured and lodged in temporary barracks behind the Delhi jail, guarded by troops. Neither Scudder nor the boy's uncle were ever apprehended.

The trials, presided over by Judge Amasa J. Parker, were travesties of justice. The defendants were all found guilty. Edward O'Connor and John VanSteenberg were sentenced to death and only the intervention of Horace Greeley saved them from the gallows. Four got life sentences and four others received shorter sentences. Fines were imposed upon thirty persons and sentence was suspended upon thirty-nine.

In 1846 John Young was elected governor on a platform calling for the abolition of the manorial system. He immediately gave a full pardon to everyone who had been convicted at Delhi and the state constitution was amended to abolish the rental system.

## THE TOWN CLOCK

Although they slept almost under the tower, the city firemen were not disturbed by the sound of the big bell as it chimed the hours until one midnight when the clock struck thirteen. The smoke eaters' ears were not conditioned to that extra stroke and it brought them off their cots.

The town clock has not tolled the hours for some years but there was a time when the sound was a familiar one throughout the community. It had a melodious quality and it carried farther than did the harsh tones of the fire bell on the bluff at the end of Hill Place.

It is surprising how many people think that the town clock is atop City Hall. In reality it is on the adjoining Westcott block. The municipality has paid the costs of maintaining the clock for over three-quarters of a century but the timepiece is on private property and there is nothing on record to indicate that the city owns it.

When Lucius and Monroe Westcott, brothers, built the block in 1886 they offered to spend \$1,000 to erect a tower to house a town clock if the money to buy the clock could be raised. The sum of \$675, just sufficient to buy the works and the 1,000 pound bell, was raised by popular subscription. The four contracting firms in town, Potter and Company, W. H. Woodin, Scott and Briggs and D. L. Hecox, each built one of the clock faces and Peter Weidman donated the painting job.

The clock, built by the Howard Clock Company of Boston, had a guaranty against a variation in accuracy of more than a minute a month and for many years it kept very good time. Normal wear has taken its toll, however, and nowadays it would not be advisable to set your watch by the big clock.

For years John Canning climbed the many flights of stairs once a week and wound the clock. For this task he received the princely sum of fifty cents a week.

The Westcotts purchased the lot, of eighty-five feet frontage, in 1885 from J. Brockway. On it was a double house occupied by A. M. Barnes and A. G. Strong. Hamilton Avenue was opened when work on the block was started in 1886 and the house was moved to the new street, where it still stands.

One man lost his life and two others were injured in a curious accident during the construction of the block. Dr. Hosea Hamilton had his offices and living quarters in a brick house on the other side of narrow Hamilton Avenue where Sears is now. One morning John and Shove Peet, elderly brothers, were talking to the physician near his side door when the unfinished cornice on the Westcott block fell. John Peet was killed instantly and the other two men were injured.

The big four-story block has had many tenants during its seventy-nine years of existence. The large cigar making firm of Doyle and Smith once occupied nearly a quarter of the upstairs space and Hayes and Potter, a smaller concern in the same line, also had space there. The YMCA was quartered in the block from 1890 until its former building on Broad Street was completed in 1900.

Oneonta's first movie theatre, the Casino, occupied the space on the first floor directly under the clock while the corner store which is now the Frew Bakery was for years the Torrey Meat Market. The Victory Food Store was located there for some years.

Dozens of other enterprises have occupied the ground floor from time to time and there have been hundreds of different tenants in the warren of rooms above.

## POPULATION CHANGES

In the two score of years from 1790 to 1830 the population of Otsego County jumped from about 2,400 to 51,372, an astounding rate of increase but easily understandable when we consider the great western movement which saw thousands of New Englanders pushing through New York State to the lands beyond during the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

Otsego was the first county in the state to feel the effects of this great flow of people since it was on the old frontier, and it was the first county to suffer, population-wise, when the tide rolled on to the West. The population figure of 51,372 in 1830 was the high mark for one hundred and thirty years, the 1960 census being the first to show an increase. That gave the county population as 51,942, an increase of only 670 souls in over a century and a quarter.

The first white settlement in Otsego County was made at Cherry Valley in 1740 and it remained the only one for twenty-five years. In 1764 the end of the Seven Years War brought release from the danger of French aggression and families began to move west to the Susquehanna.

The Fort Stanwix Treaty of 1768, establishing the frontier line in this section at the Unadilla River, resulted in another influx of settlers. These pre-Revolutionary pioneers were for the most part of Palatine German, Irish, Scottish, English or Scots-Irish (Ulstermen) stock. Unlike the immigrants of later periods, very few were from New England.

It is probable that the county had about nine hundred inhabitants at the start of hostilities with Great Britain. Each person had to make the difficult choice as to which side he would take. The larger portion remained American patriots but there was a good-sized core of Tories and the result was civil war. The loyalists were finally ousted but by the time the fighting had stopped every settlement in the county had been destroyed and the population dropped to zero.

When the Revolution was over many of the old residents returned and with them thousands of New Englanders. In the ensuing economic and cultural conflict between the Yankees and the Yorkers, as the early inhabitants of the region were called, the men from New England won decisively.

The hordes of immigrants from the New England states caused a sharp increase in the population of Otsego. In the decade from 1790 the figure rose from an estimated 2,420 to a census enumeration of 21,636 in 1800. The next decade saw an increase to 38,802. By 1820 the count was 44,856 and by 1830 it had hit 51,372. The population would not go above that figure until 1960.

In 1830 there were no large centers of population. Oneonta had about one hundred and fifty inhabitants. Most of the people lived on farms in the valleys and on the ridges. Actually, at the time the region was overpopulated for an agricultural area.

But Americans have always been on the move and "western fever" was virulent in the early days. People continued to come from New England but the exodus was greater than the influx and only the high birth rate of frontier peoples kept the population figure from dropping.

Americans are still on the go but in the present era reasons of health and comfort influence the movement of people as much as do economic factors.



## OLE SWIMMIN' HOLE

It's getting about that time of year when, in days of yore, the cry of "Last one in is a hunk of cheese", would echo through the land. The old time youngster governed his swimming habits by the season, not by the temperature of the water. When school was over he began his trips to the "ole swimmin' hole" even if he had to break the ice to get his dip.

The boy of today is a much more accomplished swimmer than was his counterpart of a half century and more ago. The oldtimer could dog paddle and knew the breast and side strokes but the crawl and the butterfly were totally unknown to him. Some boys could dive from considerable heights but they did no gymnastics on the way down. What they were concerned with was getting into the water with their head still on their shoulders.

Modern swimming pools, whether inside or out, are considerably safer and more hygienic than were the old swimming holes but we doubt if they would have appealed to the oldtime youngster. To begin with, he would have scoffed at the idea of taking a bath before his plunge. Wasn't the water in the river just as wet as that in the tub? (No showers then).

The boy who has never stood on the bank of a stream and seen his image reflected in water surrounded by a tangle of boughs has missed one of the supreme pleasures of youth. The lad who has never strolled barefoot down a dusty lane has missed his heritage and as for the kid who has never held his nose and jumped feet first into a stream dappled with sunshine, he just hasn't lived.

On a summer afternoon the gang would gather, decide to go swimming and put the decision into immediate effect. Off they would go and as they neared the pool, be it in the Susquehanna or in Silver or Oneonta creeks, the clothes would start to drop, since no one wanted to endure the insults of his fellows by being the last one in.

Sometimes bathing suits were worn but if the spot was secluded, the costume would consist of nothing before "an' rather less than 'arf o' that be-ind", as Rudyard Kipling would say. However, woe to the kid whose mother caught him paddling around in the "alltogether".

Soon everyone was in the cool drink and really living. Meanwhile, back at the place where clothes had been left, some little monster was doing a job on shirts and pants and long black stockings that no modern Boy Scout knot tyer could even approach. When the boy had finished he would shout "Chaw" and make fast tracks out of there.

When the position of the sun indicated that supper time was nearing, the youths would climb out, get their clothes and go to work with tooth and fingernail on the job of untying knots which neither sailors nor weavers, only small boys, knew how to fashion.

The swimming holes of yore are gone with the years. The Electric Light Pond has vanished and the pools in Oneonta and Silver creeks are gone. The river has changed its course repeatedly and it is now pretty difficult to tell where the Oar, the Willow and the Strawberry once were.

## NOT THE OCEAN

The story goes that sometime in the early 1900s a mother and her little girl were on an outing in the Los Angeles region. The child asked:

"Mother, whose street car are we riding on?"

"Mr. Huntington's," was the reply.

They rode past a park and the youngster inquired:

"What place is this?"

"Huntington Park."

"Where are we going?"

"To Huntington Beach."

Arrived there, so runs the tale, the child wanted to know:

"Mother, does Mr. Huntington own the ocean, too?"

Henry E. Huntington did not own the ocean but it was about the only thing in or about southern California that the native Oneontan did not claim title to or at least control.

In a past story we outlined the history of this internationally known industrialist, art connoisseur and philanthropist whose love for his native city, Oneonta, was his professed hobby and through whose munificence we have our beautiful Huntington Park and Library. Little was said, however, about the tremendous part he played in the development of Los Angeles and southern California generally.

Henry E. Huntington was for years associated with his uncle, Collis P. Huntington, who left Oneonta in 1849, helped build the Central Pacific Railroad and became a baron of transportation with a fortune of fantastic dimensions. Upon his uncle's death in 1899 Henry inherited a good share of the fortune and power to add to the considerable amount which he already had.

He went south to Los Angeles and set about acquiring the entire street railway system of that city. Once he owned that, he started the development of a system of inter-urban railroads throughout the whole southern California district. He acquired existing roads, built others and finally merged them all into the Pacific Electric Railway, which was valued at one hundred million dollars. He later sold the system to the Southern Pacific.

Meanwhile he bought tens of thousands of acres in outlying districts and by pushing his trolley lines into those sections made his real estate extremely valuable. Towns sprang up like mushrooms wherever the magical Huntington touch made the hitherto valueless lands productive.

He acquired an interest in land development companies and in banking, power and light and lumbering enterprises. Few men of wealth in this country have been as actively and directly interested in such a variety of projects as Henry E. Huntington.

Many as were the achievements in the fields of industry, commerce and transportation of this colossus of rugged individualism, he will be best remembered as a great patron of art and literature. His priceless paintings and his collection of books and manuscripts in the Huntington Library at San Marino are among the finest in the world.

## THE EDGE OF NIGHT

Things were pretty tense in May of 1940. Hitler's legions were in control of the Low Countries and were rapidly pushing through France to the Channel and England. Civilization itself seemed to be standing on the edge of destruction.

Pacifist groups were having their innings and all over the country, including Oneonta, resolutions were being passed urging that the United States keep out of the war. Thoughtful people, however, who had read *Mein Kampf* and had seen how the mad paperhanger's plans for world conquest were working out, knew that sooner or later we must enter the conflict.

People were worried but on the surface life was proceeding about as usual in Oneonta. The country was emerging from the Great Depression and there was a feeling of prosperity which had been lacking for a decade.

William H. Hoffman had announced that he would build a three story building on his Main Street property and would rent it to Sears, Roebuck. The Hartwick College a cappella choir was rehearsing for two appearances at the New York World's Fair.

There was much activity in the field of sport. Neahwa Park had been equipped with new bleachers and a lighting system and Oneonta's new entry in the Canadian-American League was giving a good account of itself under the management of Lee Riley. Among the pitchers was Dick Fowler, who was later to acquire fame with the Philadelphia Athletics.

Hartwick College was fielding a good ball club and Oneonta High had not been beaten in five games. Johnny Weir was catching the offerings of right handers Hank Vining and Dick Westcott and southpaw Ken Loucks. The infielders were Harry and George Sinstack, Ed House and Art Ritchko while the fences were patrolled by Ken Pedrone, Eddie Collins and Howie Beams.

One of the first of OHS's fine tennis teams was burning up the courts and had a string of six straight victories, including one over powerful Binghamton Central. The clever racket wielders were Al Miller, Chan House, Keith Vosburgh and Art Torrey.

The advertisements in May of 1940 carried prices that seem almost unbelievable. Torrey's market was celebrating its fifty-second anniversary with such bargains as eleven cents for a pound of bacon and twenty-seven cents a pound for the best western sirloin and porterhouse steak.

The American Stores were offering bread at seventeen cents for two loaves. The Oneonta Department Store had cotton dresses from one dollar to one ninety-eight and at the Carr Clothing Company (now Henderson's) you could buy a tweed suit for twenty dollars. Columbia records were fifty cents each at Hill's music store and the selection included the number one hit of the day, "The Woodpecker Song".

The automobile ads were intriguing. Jack Ohmeis was selling the Chevrolet business coupe for as little as \$659. Many cars purchased in 1940 were still in use six and seven years later, for it wouldn't be long before we would be at war and the manufacture of pleasure cars would be suspended for the duration.

There were clouds on the horizon in 1940 but the storm had not yet broken and Oneontans were enjoying the pleasant weather.



## FATHER OF SCHOOLS

When Jedidiah Peck started to circulate a petition urging the repeal of the infamous Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, Judge William Cooper thought that he had his political rival just where he wanted him. The urbane boss of the Federalist party in Otsego County was continually being beaten by the insignificant looking little farmer, millwright and preacher from Burlington township and Cooper did not like it.

The Sedition Act made almost any speech or act in opposition to the policies of the government punishable by imprisonment and Peck's action was certainly antagonistic. Cooper persuaded the United States attorney in New York to obtain an indictment and a federal marshal was sent to arrest Peck.

The fiery Republican was taken from his home at night and hauled to New York in chains. The arrest of the man who was to become the father of the public school system in the state caused widespread indignation and was a factor in the repeal of the act before Peck could be tried. His triumphal return to Cooperstown signalled the downfall of the Federalists in Otsego.

Jedidiah Peck was born in Lyme, Connecticut, in 1748. His formal education was scanty but he was a voracious reader. He knew large parts of the Bible by heart and his writings show familiarity with ancient and modern history, the ancient classics, philosophy, law and government.

Young Peck responded to the first call for volunteers in the Revolution and served four years in the Connecticut Line. Following his service he learned the trades of surveyor and millwright.

He migrated to Otsego County in 1790 and settled his family on a farm in the town of Burlington. He was soon hard at work, managing his farm, plying his trade of millwright and doing itinerant preaching.

Peck first held minor town offices but his reputation grew and he soon became a judge of the Court of Common Pleas. By 1796 he had acquired a considerable political following and became leader of the Republicans, as the followers of Thomas Jefferson were then called. This brought him into full collision with William Cooper, the Federalist chief in the county.

The two men were as dissimilar in appearance as they were in political views. Cooper was powerful of body, winning in manner and physically prepossessing. Peck was small of stature, ill favored of countenance and shabby of dress. But his mind was clear and sharp and his integrity unquestioned.

Jedidiah Peck was elected to the Assembly in 1789 and served in the legislature for ten years. In 1800 he introduced the first bill to establish a common school system for the state. It failed of passage but Peck kept plugging and in 1811 Governor Daniel D. Tompkins appointed him chairman of a committee to work out a suitable system. In 1812 the bill he wrote became law.

Although sixty-four years old he enlisted for the War of 1812 and served about a year on the Niagara frontier. For the remaining years of his life he lived upon his farm, acting the role of political patriarch.

"The Father of the Common School System of the State of New York" died in 1821 and was buried in a private cemetery back of his Burlington home.

## "SEME" CAMP

It was quite a thrill to watch Maude Adair, with an empty sulky behind her, jog up the track, turn at the quarter pole and come flashing by the judges' stand with two flat racers, jockeys in the saddle, flanking her. Around the half mile or mile oval the trio would go with the "guideless wonder" always in the lead.

This remarkable horse was only one of the many fine trotters and pacers owned through the years by Seymour G. Camp, one of Oneonta's most colorful citizens a half century and more ago. "Seme" Camp was perhaps the community's most ardent devotee of the Sport of Kings and his horses were known throughout the Empire State, New England and eastern Canada.

Mr. Camp was born in Laurens in 1864 and first entered business in West Oneonta where he conducted a meat market. Later he operated a similar store on Church Street here.

Always a lover of horses, he entered the livery business in Oneonta about 1895, gradually building up a large establishment. He maintained a sale and exchange business and operated closed cabs and hearses. His first place of business was on Main Street but he soon moved to Broad Street where the Enders building now is. Fire destroyed this structure in June, 1905, with the loss of twenty-one animals. Thereafter he conducted his livery business from stables behind his home on Grand Street.

The advent of the automobile spelled doom for the livery stable. Mr. Camp recognized this and became a motor car dealer about 1910. Concentrating on the new fangled mode of transportation, he gradually closed out his livery business although continuing his interest in race horses. He first had the agency for the E.M.F. car and from 1920 to 1923 conducted a partnership with Charles D. Townsend. In later years he had the agency for the Auburn and Continental automobiles.

Through the years "Seme" Camp owned about one hundred fast trotters and pacers. He usually drove his horses and held his own against some of the best sulky jockeys in the country. He was well known at practically every county fair in this part of the nation and also competed in many races on the Grand Circuit, the top level of harness racing. During the winters he raced on the ice in Canada.

Seymour Camp owned many well known horses. In addition to Maude Adair, which was a great attraction at fairs, he once owned the famous Merry Widow, which he sold for \$5,000. His Peter Pan once broke the track record in the Grand Circuit races at Springfield, Massachusetts, and Bellinardine, another of his fast steppers, held the track record at the Syracuse State Fair at one time.

Oneonta has always been a good horse town. In very early days there were frequent races on Bronson's Lane, now Maple Street, and later owners of good horse flesh used Elm Street to show off their steeds. H. M. Stanford had a good stable of racers back of his home on Elm Street where St. Mary's School now stands, and Bill Enders later had good horses on Webb Island. "Seme" Camp, however, was the premier man hereabouts in the field of harness racing.

Seymour Camp and his wife, the former Edna Rifenburg, were killed in an automobile accident near Swainsboro, Georgia, in February of 1935.

## ANIMALS OF YORE

It was a weird, chilling cry such as might have come from a woman in deep distress. As the blood-curdling wail echoed again from the hills bounding the upper Susquehanna, the settler's wife turned on her hard pallet and drew the blanket over her head while her husband raised on an elbow and grasped the flintlock which stood against the wall near the bed.

Fiction reading people of a later date might have fancied the sound as the baying of the hound of the Baskervilles but the farmer and his wife knew it for what it was—the wander-call of the cougar, also called catamount or panther. This great tawney cat, which sometimes measured twelve feet from tip of nose to tip of tail (according to Willard Yager) and with long fangs sharp as knives, was one of the big beasts which roamed the forests when the white man first came into the valley nearly two centuries ago.

The early pioneers worked, ate and slept with a weapon close to hand, for the animals which inhabited the hills and flatlands were the source of much of his food as well as being a menace to his crops and a source of danger to his wife and children. The hunters and trappers who came into the region before the first settlers, had killed off thousands of the beasts but many were still here when the land was being cleared.

The cougar was not numerous hereabouts when Oneonta was born but his cry could still be heard of a lonely night. The eminence to the north-east upon which Oneonta Video has its antenna was called for years Catamount Mountain, preserving the tradition that here was killed the last cougar known in the upper Susquehanna region.

The brown men who lived here before their pale brothers stole the land were well acquainted with the elk, or wapiti, who once roamed these parts in quantity. Tall as a man and with wide spreading antlers, the forest stags were quite numerous when Richard Smith made his journey of exploration in 1769. Near Schenevens there is a lateral stream still known as Elk Creek. Tradition has it that the lordly elk made their last stand in the narrow valley.

The graceful Virginia deer were the most numerous of all the wild "cattle of the forest" and were a menace to the farmers' crops as late as 1840 and then for a hundred years were rarely seen. When we were a boy and young man a deer hereabouts was a great curiosity.

In early days the great black bear, whom the Indians called "wananda", had their lairs in the hills. Insofar as they could, both the redskin and the white man left this powerful creature strictly alone.

The wolf and the Canadian lynx were once plentiful, as were the fox, the wolf-erine, the ring-tailed raccoon and the long-legged, snowshoe-footed white hare. The rabbit of today was a later importation and was known to neither the Indian nor the white settler.

Of small animals there was an abundance—otters and martens, fishers and brown mink, weasels and muskrats. The beaver, which once had a dam on every small stream, were about gone when the white man came but evidence of their handiwork was on every hand.

It was a sportsman's paradise but neither the redskin nor the paleface killed for sport. It was the necessities of living which set their hands to the trigger or the bow-string.



## PROSPEROUS 1915

Oneonta was bulging with prosperity back in 1915. Over one thousand men were employed in the D.&H. shops and more than one hundred train crews of five men each worked out of here. More feed and grain was handled by local dealers than in any city of the state except Buffalo and New York. Merchants delighted in the fact that more milk was produced within a radius of twenty-five miles of Oneonta than in any territory of like size in the United States.

These and many other facts about the community were related in an elaborate trade edition of the Oneonta Press dated March 4, 1915. The Press, a Democratic paper, was edited and published by Chester A. Miller, once a member of the Assembly from Otsego County and postmaster for a goodly number of years.

The edition, printed on heavy coated paper and profusely illustrated, sets forth the city's advantages as a mercantile and manufacturing center and describes in detail various businesses. Some of these were of a most interesting character.

The Dauley and Wright monument company was one of the largest in the state. The firm did business in a wooden building on Broad Street on the site of the present brick structure bearing the company name. The concern had twelve traveling salesmen who covered twenty-two counties in New York state and a large part of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Most of the monuments and statues it sold were prepared for erection in New England quarries but much work was done in the local plant by a good sized staff of skilled stone cutters.

I. S. Dauley, the senior partner, built the brick house at 11 Walnut Street now owned by Dr. Carl Spear. He later sold this and erected the residence at 61 Dietz Street now owned by Dr. C. Douglas Rowley. Charles M. Wright, the other partner, lived in the house at 53 Dietz Street now the property of Charles Drago.

The bakery business of Arthur Nye was quite an industry at this time. The manufacturing plant was at 41 Cliff Street (where Franklin's garage is now) while a retail store was maintained on Chestnut Street in the quarters now occupied by Sawyer Cleaners. This concern did business over a fifty mile radius. Each day huge truck loads of bread and other baked goods were taken to the trains and trolleys while communities not served by rail were covered by five delivery wagons and two automobile trucks. About twenty people were employed, including nine bakers.

The Oneonta Bottling Works, conducted by J. L. McLeese, had its plant in the basement of the old First National Bank building on Main Street. Here were made Imperial Nerve Tonic, Special Cheer, Orangeade and Grape Soda. A Brockway Auto-Truck took care of deliveries.

The big contracting firm at the time was McFee and Borst, which had its mill in a large wooden building on Market Street where the Angellotti parking lot is now. The firm, composed of Frank McFee and Samuel Borst, built the K. E. Morgan mansion at Emmons, the Country Club house and many residences, including the big southern colonial home of B. H. Morris on Walnut Street. They also remodeled the Elks Club and the Oddfellows Temple. The business was founded by W. H. Woodin in the 1870s.

## WE WERE FORTUNATE

Youth is not a bad judge of character, personality and ability and the evaluations which a child makes of his teachers are generally sound and certainly lasting.

We were fortunate to have as instructors people who were, in the best sense of the term, unforgettable characters. Among those grade school teachers were Ellen Hitchcock, Jennie Green, Estelle Matteson and Helen Fritts; Mabelle Boynton, Myrtle McKinney, Mary Donellan, Eliza Gee and Belinda Mead.

These women were more than fine teachers. You felt warm, comfortable and secure in their presence. The schoolroom was a projection of home and you knew that if you got into trouble, the teacher would help you. You also knew that if you misbehaved, you would catch it, but that was like home, too.

And then came high school and we found there the same breed of women. Among them were Ella Briggs and Harriet Stevens, who taught two generations of Oneontans far more than subject matter.

Ella Briggs, who taught mathematics at OHS for thirty-six years, was born in Laurens in 1863. She attended school there and then taught for some time before entering Albany Normal School, from which she was graduated in 1883.

The family moved to Oneonta in 1885, her father, Albert O. Briggs, buying the house at 27 Walnut Street where she would live the rest of her life. For four years she helped her father manage his extensive real estate holdings. In 1889 she became a teacher in the Oneonta Union School, eventually becoming head of the mathematics department and vice-principal. She retired in 1925.

If Miss Briggs couldn't teach you math, you were hopeless. She was a strict disciplinarian and when you were in her classes you paid attention to business or else. She was fair, however, and therefore highly respected. For all her surface brusqueness, she was a warm human being to whom you turned naturally for advice and help, which she gave in abundance.

Following retirement, Miss Briggs turned to active work in the Methodist Church, the DAR, the Woman's Club and the Burroughs Club and gave much of herself in those fields. She died in 1938, full of years and honors.

Harriet Stevens was a native of Milford, although the family home was for years at Mt. Vision. As a young girl she taught in New Lisbon, Hartwick and Milford. She later attended Hartwick Seminary and Albany Normal College and following graduation taught at Fly Creek and was principal at Milford before coming to the Oneonta school in 1878.

For years she was principal of the intermediate department in the old building on Academy Street and then became the history teacher in Oneonta High School.

We had her in Ancient, English and American History during the last years of her long career. Her teaching skills were still intact and her personality was as warm as ever but her discipline had slipped badly. We are now ashamed of some of the stunts we and the other kids played on her but she had our respect and we learned much in her classes. She retired in 1913 and died the year after, also full of years and honors.

Possibly time has influenced our judgment of these two women but we do not think so. If they were alive today, we would consider them just as good teachers and fine persons as we did in our boyhood.

## A FULL LIFE

As one of the original '49ers, as a Civil War cavalryman and as a man who was prominent in Oneonta's religious, fraternal and business life for many years, George Reynolds led a full and satisfying life.

This noted citizen of old was born in Harpersfield, Delaware County, in 1830, his parents being John and Sally (Kenyon) Reynolds. The family moved to Oneonta when he was three and he lived here the remaining eighty years of his life. His father was a harness maker by occupation and the son took up that trade after he had finished his schooling.

In 1849 he joined the first gold seekers in California, making the trip in a company of Oneonta men which included Collis P. Huntington, later to become one of the builders of the Central Pacific Railroad and founder of one of the country's greatest fortunes, and Carleton Emmons Watkins, in later years one of the world's great scenic photographers.

The trip was made via the Isthmus of Panama, the party going up the Chagres River and then packing overland to the Pacific, the route followed being practically the same as that taken by the Panama Canal. While in California Mr. Reynolds carried mail and engaged in an express business, transporting ore and gold dust by muleback from the diggings to Sacramento and San Francisco.

The death of his father caused him to return to Oneonta five years later. In partnership with his brother, Charles, he continued the harness business started by the father. When the Civil War broke out in 1861 he, in company with several other Oneonta men, enlisted in the Third New York Volunteer Cavalry, and served through the conflict as a saddler sergeant.

After Appomattox he returned to Oneonta and resumed the trade of harness maker. Later he engaged in the grocery business, for some time alone and then in partnership with James Roberts. While in this venture he instituted the first wagon delivery of groceries.

In 1888, following a fire which destroyed several wooden buildings, Mr. Reynolds built the four story brick block which stands on the southwest corner of Main and Chestnut Streets. For some time he was a partner with his son, George Irving Reynolds, in the bookstore which operated there for many years under the firm name of George Reynolds and Son.

George Reynolds was very closely affiliated with the First Methodist Church. He joined in 1859 when the Society was still occupying its first structure, which stood at the top of the slope back of the present edifice. When a new church was built in 1869 on the site of the present one it was said that he contributed half of all he possessed at the time. During his fifty-four years of membership he held every secular office in the gift of the local Society.

Mr. Reynolds was made a Mason in 1866 and when he died he was the second oldest member of Oneonta Lodge. He was also a member of E. D. Farmer Post, Grand Army of the Republic, and of the Veteran Firemen's Association.

He was married in 1870, in Cherry Valley, to Emily C. Allen, the daughter of a prominent clergyman. They had five children, of whom three are still living, George Irving and C. Edgar Reynolds of Oneonta and Floyd Reynolds of Albany.

This gentle and honorable man died in December of 1913 and was buried in the family plot in Glenwood Cemetery.



## NAMES AGAIN

Because he was prominent in Delaware County affairs in olden times and since he was somewhat of an autocrat, Ebenezer Foote was nicknamed "The Great Mogul". He lived at the county seat and when a name for the hamlet became necessary, someone suggested that it be called Delhi, after the city in India where the real Great Mogul resided. At least that's the story of how the village got its name and who are we to doubt it?

Again, names on the land! This time we will discuss place names in Otsego and Delaware Counties and see if we can't allay the curiosity of some inquiring minds.

Indian nomenclature abounds in Otsego, what with Oneonta, Otego, Otsego, Otsdawa, Unadilla, Schenevus and Susquehanna. In a previous story we gave the meanings of Oneonta, Unadilla and Susquehanna. Otego is a derivative of Wahtega, the name of the Indian village at the confluence of Otego creek and the river.

Otsego is a form of Otesaga, "Head of the River", according to Willard Yager. James Fenimore Cooper said it meant "a place of meeting" but this translation is generally discredited. Great author though he was, Cooper is not noted for his knowledge of the red men of whom he wrote.

Otsdawa meant "wild hemp place" while Schenevus is supposed to have been named after an Indian chief who once lived in the vicinity. Only one hamlet in Delaware County, Cadosia, meaning "covered with a blanket" (of snow?) has an Indian name.

The Yankees who invaded the region following the Revolution remembered the New England towns whence they came and gave their new homes such names as Worcester, Exeter, Plainfield and Pittsfield in Otsego County and Colchester, Stamford and Roxbury in Delaware.

Many communities were named after early settlers or patent holders: Hartwick, Edmeston, Cooperstown, Roseboom, Butts Corners, Pierstown, Wells Bridge, Davenport, Kortright, Hale's Eddy, Walton, Franklin, Shavertown and Harpersfield.

During the early part of the 19th century a good deal of Central New York went through a classical name period with the result that we have Utica, Syracuse, Ovid, Rome and Pompey. Otsego County missed out on this fad but it did get in on the Amity, Friendship, Freedom type of naming, as witness Welcome, a small settlement near Hartwick.

Lena is the only place in Otsego named after a woman but don't ask us who she was. Delaware has but two: Margaretville, so called in honor of the wife of Robert Livingston, who once owned all the land thereabouts, and Charlotteville, named after a Queen Consort of Great Britain.

Some picturesque old names were lost when Toot Huddle was changed to Fall Bridge; Sodom Point to South Hartwick; Bulldog to Gilbertsville; Dog Town to Bowerstown; Jockey Hollow to Maple Grove; and Sheepskin Corners to West Laurens.

Sweet Ireland, originally a settlement of Irish people near Cooperstown, has about disappeared and Hop City, also near the county seat, has completely vanished, jail and all.

## ELECTRIC LAKE

There was a day when Electric Lake was a pleasant part of Oneonta's scenery and a necessary part of its economy. But time marches on with feet that brush from its path that which is outdated and the pretty pond has gone the way of much that was picturesque in the community that used to be.

Until about ten years ago New York State Electric and Gas had a hydro and steam generating plant near the old silk mill (now the Otsego Iron and Metal plant) at East End and the pond back of the power dam was called Electric Lake.

Here for a half century Oneonta youths swam, boated and fished. There was some skating in the winter but ice cutting operations prevented that activity much of the time. There has been no water in the lake for a decade now and the site presents a desolate view, in sharp contrast to the pleasant aspect which it once had.

Electricity came to Oneonta in 1887, the first generating plant being in an old structure on Broad Street where the Oneonta Grocery Company now is. The next year a brick power house was built on Prospect Street and four steam engines generating two hundred fifty horse power were installed.

In 1898 the Oneonta Electric and Power Company, a locally financed concern which owned the system until 1918, bought about fifty acres of land at East End, built a dam and a hydro-electric power house and then threw a bulkhead across the Susquehanna to divert water into the pond. The next year an auxiliary steam plant was added. For years all of Oneonta's electricity came from this source.

During my boyhood the electric light pond was a favorite swimming spot. On a hot afternoon Stuart Keenan would hitch a pair of ponies to a rig, the gang would pile in and off we'd go for a few hours enjoyment in the cool water.

When I was in high school the pond was an excellent place to take your girl for a bit of canoeing on a pleasant Saturday or Sunday afternoon. One such occasion I have reason never to forget. One sunny afternoon in March of 1912 or '13 Arthur Polley and myself rented a canoe from Phil Green and took two girls for a ride on the lake. We paddled up to the bulkhead and then an irresistible impulse to show off before the young ladies possessed us.

We put the fair ones on the bank, took off our shoes and coats and successfully shot the dam, shipping only a little water. This foolhardy performance made us instant heroes.

Art Polley's twin brother, Edward, also wanted to be a hero and asked me to co-operate, so the next Saturday he and I—no girls this time—repeated the stunt. We managed to overshoot the dam, the bow came down hard and over we went into the white water at the foot of the barrier. Ed grabbed the canoe and floated downstream while I landed under the boat and had to kick it away to get to the surface.

The swim to the bank wasn't long but the water was ice cold, my heavy clothing (including long johns) weighed a few tons and the undertow kept pulling me back. Obviously I made it but I didn't have much left. Then two wet, cold and thoroughly deflated heroes took a shivering ride home to a less than cordial parental welcome.

In 1954 the New York State Electric and Gas discontinued operations at this plant. The water wheel was dismantled and the gates removed. Today only a few small, stagnant pools remain of what was once a fifty acre expanse of shining water.

## IN THE BEGINNING

The hills which rim our city and unto whose pleasant aspect we daily lift our eyes are as much a part of Oneonta, past and present, as are our streets and buildings. How did they come about and when?

The rock formations which we see in our little corner of the world were laid down in the Devonian stage of the Paleozoic period of geologic time, a comparatively recent era. The Catskill Mountains, of which our hills are a continuation, are much younger than the Adirondacks, in which are found rock formations as old as any on earth. Our hills are older, however, than the Rockies or the Sierras.

Following the period during which mighty upheavals of the earth's surface formed the Adirondacks, there occurred a lowering of land surfaces and repeated invasions of marine waters. In the course of millions of years sediment in the shifting seas was laid down thousands of feet thick and these deposits formed the rocks which compose our present hills. These shales and sandstones contain many marine fossils.

These Devonian rocks are comparatively simple. Nearly everywhere the strata are nearly horizontal without the tipping and the extrusions of igneous rocks from the earth's interior which characterize the Adirondacks. This whole section, including the Catskills, was once a vast plain and the present valleys are the results of erosion by rivers and streams, particularly at the end of the Glacial Period.

During the later stages of the Devonian period there was an intermingling of marine and fresh water deposits. In the east, fresh water sedimentation is represented by the Oneonta red and gray shales, called by that name in geological texts. Here certain areas were temporarily above the sea and on them existed a wonderful flora of land plants, including large tree ferns and giant club mosses. Several petrified forests, one above the other, have been discovered at Gilboa.

At the end of the Devonian period, perhaps a million years ago, all of the land hereabouts gradually rose above the sea and animal and vegetable life appeared. Then about 500,000 years ago, the glaciers came down from the northwest to cover nearly all of New York State with ice 6,000 to 10,000 feet thick. About 20,000 or 25,000 years ago the ice began to melt and to recede and finally to disappear altogether. During this time the Susquehanna, Chenango, Unadilla and Delaware rivers carried enormous volumes of glacial flood waters which cut the valleys to their present shape.

As the ice receded and the flood waters diminished plant and animal life resumed in our valley and over thousands of years conditions developed that were favorable for the advent of man, who made his first appearance here about 4,000 years ago.



## THE RONAN BROTHERS

In the days of our youth and young manhood Ronan was a well known name in Oneonta. The dry goods firm of Ronan Brothers did a flourishing business and the partners, Michael and Edward, were active in many phases of community life.

Michael G., the older of the brothers, was born in Canton, Pennsylvania, in 1866. Soon after graduating from high school there he became principal of his Alma Mater and served successfully in that capacity for seven years. Mercantile life had a greater appeal for him than teaching, and he became a partner in a dry goods firm in Athens, Pennsylvania.

He wanted a business of his own and hearing of the growth and prosperity of Oneonta he came here in 1899 on a tour of inspection. Liking what he saw, he bought the Bissell block (now the east portion of Bresee's) and established a dry goods store.

M. G. Ronan became very much a part of the life of the community. He was a director of the Wilber National Bank, a member of the Board of Education and secretary of the board of managers of the Fox Memorial Hospital. He helped organize the Merchant's Association and was its president in 1909. He was a devoted member of St. Mary's Catholic Church and was active in the affairs of the Knights of Columbus and the Oneonta Club.

Mr. Ronan was married in 1897 in Athens to Anna Doran, who died in 1906. They had two children, Thomas and Mary. M. G. Ronan died in 1913 and was buried in Athens. During the time of the funeral every store and business place in Oneonta was closed.

The brother, Edward M. Ronan, was born in Canton in 1874. He received his education there and at the age of twenty went to Hornell where he was engaged in business for four years. Later in 1899 he came to Oneonta and went into partnership with Michael under the firm name of Ronan Brothers.

Edward Ronan was even more active locally than was his brother. The affairs of St. Mary's parish took much of his time and effort and the parochial school can be considered a monument to his work and zeal. He was a member of the Knights of Columbus and of the Holy Name Society and was a trustee of the former and a president of the latter organization.

He was one of the organizers of Oneonta Lodge of Elks and was long active in that group. He was exalted ruler in 1920 and a trustee from that year until his death. Other organizations to which he belonged were Kiwanis, the Oneonta Club, the Oneonta Country Club and the Chamber of Commerce.

Like his brother, Edward Ronan was a director of the Wilber National Bank. He was a member of the city park commission and an enthusiastic believer in the extension and development of the park system.

He was married to Katherine Broderick in 1900 at Hornell. They had two daughters, Helen and Katherine. Mrs. Ronan's death preceded that of her husband by but a few months.

Edward M. Ronan died in 1924 and was buried in Calvary Cemetery. During his funeral business places in the city were again closed.

## PIONEER FLYER

When Earl V. Fritts saw Walter Johnson (an early exhibition flyer) circling the Oneonta Fair grounds in his crude biplane that September day in 1912 he knew that riding motorcycles would no longer have any thrill for him.

Two months later he and Frank Burnside went to Bath, N. Y., where the Thomas brothers had their factory and flying school. They took a ride in a Thomas plane, sitting on the wing on either side of the radiator and clinging to the struts. That ride did it.

The two men signed up and after several weeks of instruction received licenses signifying that they were the 212th and 213th men in the world permitted to fly aircraft. Since then over one hundred thousand licenses have been issued.

Fritts and Burnside were Otsego County's first birdmen. After they received their wings, their paths separated. Fritts flew but a short time while Burnside went on to become one of the country's best known pilots. But this is Fritts' story and his pal must wait until another day.

Fritts ran a bicycle and motorcycle shop in Oneonta and was a first rate mechanic. During his pilot training he rebuilt an old Thomas plane which he had bought, installing in it a seventy horsepower, water cooled four cylinder-in-line engine.

After he had been licensed early in 1913 Fritts shipped his Thomas plane to Oneonta and reassembled it on the South Side farm then owned by Horace Kerr and later by Claude Taylor. He also built a new plane, modifying somewhat the design of the old. This one had a one hundred and twenty horsepower, six cylinder engine.

While he was building this plane Fritts made exhibition flights in the Thomas. In the spring of 1913 he flew at Troy and on Memorial Day made at Adams, Massachusetts, the first airplane flight ever in Berkshire County. He went back to Troy for the Fourth of July. The going exhibition rate at that time was \$100 per flight.

Fritts received contracts faster than he could handle them so he employed George Newbury of Binghamton to fly one of the planes. The latter had flown but a short time when he cracked up the new plane at Prattsville but walked away from the wreckage. The plane was repaired and a year later Newbury crashed at Troy. This time he was killed and the plane demolished.

Fritts stored the old plane in the Taylor barn and gave up his dreams of a flying school and an exhibition career. Forty years later the old Thomas, still in flying condition, was purchased by a collector of old planes.

During the years the Thomas biplane was gathering dust in the Oneonta barn aviation marched forward with mighty strides. The machine with which Earl Fritts thrilled thousands, resembles a modern jet in the same way a handcar looks like the Twentieth Century Limited.

The Thomas was of the "pusher" type with the motor between the wings and the propellor in the rear. The top wing had a span of thirty-seven and a half feet while the lower was ten feet shorter. The pilot sat out in the open just forward of the lower wing with the motor directly behind him. The ailerons were operated by a shoulder yoke, the pilot leaning when he wanted to right the plane or bank for a turn.

## "GIB" BLIGH

According to a story which was heard frequently in the olden days, two or three times a week Gib Bligh would walk from his men's furnishing store at the corner of Main and Chestnut Streets to the East End, catch a ride back on some farmer's rig and during the journey would sell the driver a complete outfit of clothing, sight unseen.

The story is doubtless apocryphal but it does point up the fact that Gilbert Bligh, a beloved character in Oneonta for many years, always had his eye on the main chance and never passed up a good selling opportunity.

Gilbert Bligh was born in Prattsville in 1841 and was a son of Samuel and Elizabeth (Gilbert) Bligh. He attended the local schools and in 1862, at the age of twenty-one, enlisted in the 120th New York Volunteer Infantry, serving in that unit until the Civil War was over.

In 1867 he married Dolly Hunt of Prattsville, a direct descendant of John More, the first white settler in the town of Roxbury, Delaware County. Shortly after the wedding they moved to Scranton, Pennsylvania, where Mr. Bligh engaged in business. In 1871 they came to Oneonta where he conducted a grocery store for a few years. He then ran general stores in Davenport and Cortland for some years and returned in 1893 to Oneonta, where he had purchased the clothing store of Mandelbaum Brothers in the Stanton Opera House block on the north-west corner of Main and Chestnut Streets.

He conducted the business until 1914 when he retired on account of failing health, selling the store to Ellery W. Spencer, who had been one of his clerks. Another man whom he had trained in the clothing business and who later had a store of his own in Oneonta was Frank A. Herrieff.

Mr. Bligh was an enterprising merchant and a shrewd business man but he was strictly ethical in his dealings and had the respect and affection of his fellow merchants and of the citizenry in general. He was long a member of the Merchant's Association, which preceded the Chamber of Commerce, and was active in all of its affairs.

He was a long time member of E. D. Farmer Post of the Grand Army of the Republic and gave considerable time to the work of that organization of Civil War veterans. He was a member of the First Methodist Church throughout his life in Oneonta.

The Blighs had two beautiful daughters. The older one married Egbert C. Slade, who was associated with the Oneonta Milling Company. The Slades eventually moved to Middletown. The younger daughter, Maude, became the wife of H. Burton Gildersleeve, member of an old Oneonta family and the proprietor of a drugstore here for many years.

Gilbert Bligh died in July of 1919 at the home of his daughter in Middletown. The body was returned to Oneonta and the funeral was held at the home of his other daughter, Mrs. Gildersleeve, 45 Ford Avenue, Rev. Dr. B. M. Johns of the First Methodist Church officiating. Interment was by the side of his wife in Riverside Cemetery, the bearers being A. D. Rowe, Everett J. Gurney, Frank A. Herrieff and Ellery W. Spencer.



## OUR HUNTINGTON

When Henry E. Huntington told a reporter that his hobby was Oneonta, he was being just a bit sentimental. It is true that he did have a great love for the town where he was born and grew up but the overriding passion of this enormously wealthy man was the collecting of rare books and manuscripts and of art in its various forms.

A born collector with an instinctive appreciation of fine things, Ed Huntington, as he was known to his friends in Oneonta and elsewhere, had the money to buy what he wanted and as a result the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery in San Marino, California, is one of the world's great repositories of literature and art.

Henry Huntington inherited a good share of the huge estate of his uncle, Collis P. Huntington, who left Oneonta in 1849 to seek his fortune in California and ended up as one of the great railroad tycoons of all time., Henry added to this wealth by railroad operations of his own and by vast real estate operations in Southern California.

He "retired" in 1908 to devote the remainder of his life to the accumulation of rare books and art pieces representing "the reward of all the work I have done and the realization of much happiness".

His first love was his books and manuscripts centering on English and American history and literature, most of these being collected between 1907 and 1927. He bought most of the art treasures toward the end of that score of years.

The most prized exhibits in the Huntington Library include the Ellsmere manuscript of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, made about 1400; the Gutenberg Bible (circa 1450), which was the first printed bible; the first collected edition of Shakespeare's plays, printed in 1623 and known as the First Folio; Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* in his own handwriting (1771-78); and Edgar Allen Poe's original manuscript of *Annabel Lee*.

The over one million books and manuscripts, including twenty thousand first editions, are housed in an edifice of classical design shaped like the letter E while the paintings and other art objects are in the Huntington mansion. Among the world famous paintings are Gainsborough's "The Blue Boy" (reputed to have cost him nearly a million dollars), Lawrence's "Pinkie" and Reynolds' "Sarah Siddons as the Tragic Muse".

On the two hundred acre estate are magnificent botanical gardens, including the Oriental Garden and the Desert Garden containing some twenty-five thousand plants. The whole cultural mecca has attracted over five million visitors, together with eighty-five hundred scholars and research workers from all over the world.

Henry E. Huntington was the man who gave Huntington Memorial Library and Huntington Park to his native city and endowed them generously. He had further plans for Oneonta and was on his way here to discuss them when he died in a Philadelphia hospital in 1927. What those plans were must remain a mystery but they were surely pretentious, for Ed Huntington never did things by halves.

## THE OTHER FORDS

The name Ford has been a potent one in Oneonta's history. In our books we have often mentioned Eliakim Reed Ford, the first of the name in the area, who was for years the most prominent man in the community and whose children followed in his history making footsteps.

There was another Ford family, however, whose accomplishments were nearly as great as those of the pioneer group, to which it was distantly related.

Newton I. Ford, the head of this clan, was born in the town of Richfield on August 1, 1836. His father was a second cousin of E. R. Ford, both being descendants of Colonel Jacob Ford, a Revolutionary soldier.

When about eighteen years of age he came to Oneonta and entered the employ of Yager and Reynolds, general merchants. In December of 1856 he was married to Mary Shepherd, thus allying himself with one of the first families to settle on the Oneonta Plains.

Following his marriage he became associated with his father-in-law, Elisha Shepherd, who ran a general store in a wooden building on Main Street where the Sisson store now is.

In 1865 Mr. Ford established Oneonta's first drugstore in a small frame structure next to the Ford stone store at the corner of Main and Broad Streets. This building had once been on the corner of Main and Dietz. Its first floor was used as a marble shop while in a room above, the present Masonic Lodge was organized in 1859. It was moved across the street some years before the Central Hotel block was built.

Fire destroyed the drugstore and adjacent buildings in 1881 and the present brick block on the south-west corner of Broad was erected on the site. N. I. Ford continued his business in the block, being the sole proprietor much of the time but at various periods having as partners his cousins, E. R. Ford, Jr., and Raymond L. Ford. In 1888 he sold out to another cousin, Edward E. Ford.

The latter conducted the business until about 1900 when he was succeeded by Dr. Merton, the son of Newton Ford. Dr. Ford, who, although a physician, never practiced medicine, ran the store until 1916 when he sold out to Albert Hutson. The store was located where the Oneonta Coal and Supply Company was and Joseph A. McCarthy, jeweler, is now.

N. I. Ford took a full part in the life of the village. He was a trustee of the village corporation for some time and in 1878 was chosen its president. He was a member of the Resolutes, an early Oneonta volunteer fire company, and at the time of his death was the oldest member of Oneonta Masonic Lodge. He was a regular attendant at the Methodist Episcopal Church, to which he was a liberal contributor.

He had two sons, Dr. Ford and Arthur E. Ford, the latter for many years a member of the feed and grain firm of Ford & Rowe. Mrs. Albert S. Nader, 95 River Street; Mrs. Herbert Plantz, 4 Club Avenue; and LeRoy S. House, Jr., College Park Drive, are his great-grandchildren.

Newton I. Ford spent winters in California and summers in Oneonta following his retirement. He died at his home on Chestnut Street (a large house standing between the present Elks Club and Victory Market) on July 12, 1910. He was buried in the family lot in Riverside Cemetery.

## THE FOREST PRIMEVAL

"This is the forest primeval. The whispering pines and the hemlocks . . ."

It was of Acadia that Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote but it could just as well have been of the valley of the Susquehanna, for when the white man first saw these vales and hills they were covered with a forest the like of which can be found nowhere on earth today.

Branch to branch the trees marched, from horizon to horizon, their ranks cut only by the river and its tributaries and by the few clearings where the redskin had his home and raised his meagre crops.

Trees there were of every kind, both evergreen and deciduous, that grow in a temperate clime—pine and hemlock, oak, maple and cherry, chestnut, beech and linden, as well as butternut and basswood, boxwood and mountain ash.

There were shrubs in great variety; wild plum and crabapple, buckthorn and the shads. In the shady dells grew the wood lily, the orchid and the lady's slipper as well as the scarlet alluvials, protected by the warrior nettle. The stream banks were red in season with the water pink, or cardinal, while in the marshes were patches of golden cowslip.

The forest teemed with game and the waters with fish. There were great herds of deer, preyed upon by roving bands of timber wolves. Along the ridges were bear, panther, lynx and the catamount, or wildcat.

Smaller animals, such as the fox, raccoon, otter, marten and mink abounded. In the narrow valleys the beaver built his dams. In the marshlands were duck and geese and amid the brush dwelt grouse and wild turkeys. At times the skies were darkened by vast flights of passenger pigeons, which once existed by the millions but today can be found nowhere in the world.

The smaller streams were filled with brook and salmon trout while each year the shad ran up the river. In the lakes were bass and pickerel.

So it was when the first settlers came into the valley but so it was not long to remain. Man had to conquer the wilderness or perish and, paradoxically, the wilderness helped him to do it.

Unlike the settlers of the West, whose Conestoga wagons carried much that they needed and whose homesteads were ready for the plow, those who came first into our region had only such goods as could be carried in a pack or in saddle bags and their farm lands had to be cleared of timber, foot by laborious foot.

While he was building his rude home and clearing a few acres for the first plowing, the pioneer was forced to live off the land. About everything he needed in the way of food, clothing or shelter, came from the forests.

Gradually the trees were cut down. Some of the wood was used and some rafted down the river but much of it was burned where it had stood. The larger wild life disappeared, leaving only the small animals we have today. The game birds were shot out of the skies and as the streams were dammed or became polluted by sawdust, most of the fish perished.

Today we have our busy city, our quiet villages and the smiling countryside, created for our use by a breed of tough, self-reliant men and women, who, despite their toil and their hardships, lived full and happy lives.



## A GOOD CITIZEN

Back in the days when more grain and feed were handled in Oneonta than anywhere else in the state except Buffalo and New York it was not uncommon for brokers in Boston or Buffalo, Philadelphia or New York to call the president of the Elmore Milling Company here for advice as to the state of the market. Those who heeded his words made money, for Harry M. Goldsmith was one of the most knowledgeable men in his field in the northeastern United States.

This remarkable man was born in 1869 in the town of Meredith, Delaware County, and was the son of Henry and Mary (McCormick) Goldsmith. Both of his grandfathers were English sea captains who had retired to the Delaware hills after years of ranging the oceans of the world. He attended a country school near Treadwell and was then a student at the famous DLI in Franklin and later at the Hudson River Institute and College, at Claverack.

Following the completion of his education he clerked for a time in a general store at Croton, now Treadwell. He came to Oneonta in 1890 and for fifteen years was a salesman for the firm of J. O. and G. N. Rowe. In 1906 he became plant manager of the Oneonta Milling Company, a position he held until the Elmore Milling Company was organized in 1911 and took over the business.

He was assistant general manager for Elmore until the firm was incorporated in 1925 when he became a stockholder and vice-president. Upon the death of Edwin W. Elmore in 1927 Mr. Goldsmith became president. Under his management the firm became preeminent in its field and he earned the reputation of being one of the best grain men in the country. He was also president of Elmore Stores, Inc., the concern's retail outlet for the proprietary feeds it manufactured.

In 1914 Mr. Goldsmith purchased the Susquehanna Valley Mill at Otego, established in 1797, and this became one of his hobbies. It was later conducted by his son, Walter M. Goldsmith, and now, in a new mill and location, is managed by the latter's son-in-law, Arnold Spence.

In spite of his devotion to the Elmore business, Mr. Goldsmith found time for many civic activities. He was particularly interested in St. James' Episcopal Church, of which he was senior warden at the time of his death. He was a member of Oneonta Masonic Lodge and Chapter and of Kalurah Shrine Temple. He was a charter member of both the Oneonta Club and the Oneonta Country Club and was a past president of Rotary.

Other organizations to which he gave time were the Chamber of Commerce, the United Commercial Travelers, the American Feed Dealers Association and the Grain Dealers Association. He was on the executive committee of the Otschodela Boy Scout Council and on the YMCA board and for some years served the city as a member of the Water Board.

Mr. Goldsmith was a man of many benefactions, most of them known only to himself and the recipient. That was his nature and his desire.

He was married in Oneonta on January 21, 1896, to Anna M. Keyes, a member of a family long noted in the community. They had one son, Walter M. Goldsmith, who now lives at 7 Union Street.

Harry McCormick Goldsmith died on April 14, 1942. The funeral, attended by an overflow crowd, was held in St. James' church which he had served so long and so well. Burial was in Riverside Cemetery. Thus ended the distinguished career of one of Oneonta's foremost citizens.

## FATHER NASH

Their surname was Nash and their only Christian name was Daniel. Each was a missionary minister and each was known as "Father". The wife of each was named Olive. The name of one was a beloved word in Otsego County and the name of the other was similarly honored in Lewis and Jefferson. And yet the two contemporaries, whose fields of endeavor were not far apart, never met.

These men whose lives present such an unusual coincidence were Rev. Daniel Nash, the famous Presbyterian revivalist of the North Country and Rev. Daniel Nash, the equally noted Episcopal "Rector of the Churches in Otsego County", one of the most remarkable men who ever lived in the area.

Our Daniel Nash was born in Massachusetts in 1763. He was educated at Yale, from which he was graduated in 1785 in the same class as Noah Webster. In his doctrinal belief Nash was originally Presbyterian and in matters of church policy he was sympathetic to the Congregational denomination. However, within ten years of his graduation from college, he became a communicant of the Episcopal church and commenced his studies for Holy Orders.

Through the influence of Rev. Dr. Daniel Burhans, who had made several tours through Otsego County, Nash became fired with missionary zeal. In 1797, having taken deacon's orders, he came to this section with his bride, Olive Lusk. They made their first home in Exeter and his first duties were divided between there and Morris. In 1801 he was ordained to the Episcopal priesthood.

For the next thirty-five years Father Nash went up and down the county, preaching and founding churches. He and his wife and children lived in rude cabins of unhewn logs with only a single room.

The best testimony to his ability and devotion is the fact that he was able in such a region to succeed at all. Before his arrival the upper Susquehanna settlements had been dominated by the faith of Calvin. Outside of the Scots-Irish, most of the pioneers from 1794 until 1810 were from New England, the home of Congregationalism. Before he and Dr. Burhans began their work there was not a trace of Episcopal influence in the valley.

As the result of tireless work, endless travel and constant preaching at many outposts, Father Nash was able gradually to establish Episcopal churches throughout the county. In 1801 Zion Church was built at Morris and eight years later he organized St. Matthew's in Unadilla. In 1811 he completed the organization of Christ Church in Cooperstown, of which he was rector in partial residence for seven years.

Besides giving constant attention to these parishes, Father Nash regularly or occasionally paid pastoral visits to many other towns: Richfield Springs, Cherry Valley, Westford and Milford; Edmeston, Burlington and Hartwick; Fly Creek, Laurens and LeRoy (now Schuyler Lake); Worcester and New Lisbon.

Father Nash died in 1837 and was buried in Christ Churchyard at Cooperstown, the grave being marked by a tall obelisk bearing only the words "Father Nash".

No Otsego pioneer deserves honor more than Father Daniel Nash, a man of apostolic simplicity, devotion and complete self-abnegation, the result of whose work can be found in almost every village in the county.

## ANDREW E. CEPERLEY

He was Oneonta's fourth mayor, its second YMCA secretary and its first football coach. Add to these titles those of business man, real estate operator and churchman and you can see that Andrew E. Ceperley was a most useful citizen.

This prominent man was born in 1858 in the town of Laurens, the son of Chauncey and Emeline (Ackley) Ceperley. He received his education in the district schools and at Oneonta High. He entered business in 1885 when he and E. O. Jaynes bought the Oneonta drygoods store of Orrin Colegrove. They operated the business until 1887 when Mr. Ceperley sold his interest to his partner and with Charles Gardner started a steam laundry, the first in this area.

The laundry was first located in the building on the postoffice site which later became the mill of Briggs and Miller, and was the ancestor of the Otsego Laundry.

Soon after the YMCA building on Broad Street was finished in 1900 Mr. Ceperley left the laundry firm and became the Y's general secretary, succeeding A. E. Merritt. The YMCA was organized here primarily to help railroad men but the new secretary was interested in boys and he instituted several programs for them.

In 1904 he gathered a group of high school boys at the Fair Grounds and taught them the game of football. This was Oneonta High's first gridiron team. It represented not only the Yellow and White but also the YMCA and upon occasion some of the boys would help out on the State Normal eleven, eligibility rules evidently being non-existent at the time.

In 1910, Mr. Ceperley resigned as secretary to engage in the real estate and insurance business with Wendell R. Morgan. In 1913 the Ceperley and Morgan Real Estate Company was organized. This active firm was largely responsible for the development of West End and of the Walling Heights area and planned the Ideal Homes section between East Street and Wilber Park. Upon the death of Mr. Morgan in 1927 the partnership terminated and Clarence V. Ceperley joined his father in the firm of Ceperley and Ceperley.

Andrew Ceperley served for four years on the Board of Public Safety and was an alderman from the Second Ward. Upon the death of Mayor Joseph S. Lunn in June of 1917 he was appointed to fill the unexpired term and then was elected mayor for two terms of his own.

He was an active member of the Main Street Baptist Church, serving as deacon, treasurer, superintendent of the Sunday School and teacher of the Baraca Class. In 1929 he was president of the Northern Baptist Conference.

During World War I he was a member of the Food Conservation Committee and during the coal strike of 1922-23 was county fuel administrator. He was a member of the boards of directors of the Mt. Vision Tuberculosis Sanatorium and of the Otsego County Public Health and Tuberculosis Association and was the first treasurer of the Clara Welch Thanksgiving Home at Cooperstown. He belonged to the Oneonta Masonic Lodge, the Oneonta Club, Rotary and the Maccabees.

Andrew E. Ceperley, good man and good citizen, died on March 13, 1933, and was buried in Riverside Cemetery.



## THE DRILL

The young misses who comprised "The Drill", an organization which was the sensation of the village seventy-five years ago, could hardly wait for night to fall. The week before they had been defeated at Norwich by a similar group of girls and they wanted revenge. The Oneonta team had used only military maneuvers whereas the Chenango country damsels had introduced a lot of ballet movements and the local girls didn't consider that quite cricket.

This group of twenty-two of "the fairest and most cultured misses in our community" (as the Herald put it) was organized in 1888 by officers of the Third Separate Company, New York National Guard. The girls met at the armory and were drilled by Sergeant Horace E. Patten in marching and in the manual of arms, with lengths of broomstick used instead of rifles.

The outfit was uniformed in dark blue flannel skirts and blouses, the latter trimmed with white braid and brass buttons. White belts and military caps completed the costumes.

Gertrude Patten, a sister of the drillmaster, was the floor leader, with the rank of sergeant, while the beat was furnished by two snare drummers, Lena Scramling and May Whipple.

Early in 1889 three competitions were held with a group of Norwich lasses. The first match was held in that village and the local girls were accompanied on the trip by a large number of parents, boy friends and interested citizens. Oneonta lost that one and there was much wailing and gnashing of journalistic teeth. It would appear that "we wuz robbed". After all, one of the judges was the father-in-law of the Norwich drillmaster and also had two daughters on the team.

The second contest, which was so eagerly awaited, was held a week later in Oneonta and must have been quite an affair. The Norwich girls were met at the train by the local team, together with the Third Separate Company and the village band and were escorted to the Central Hotel for tea. The match, which was held in the elaborately decorated armory, was witnessed by twelve hundred people, a big crowd for a place of only six thousand inhabitants.

Oneonta won this one and there was great rejoicing. A rubber contest was held two weeks later in a neutral village, Walton, and again the belles from the banks of the Susquehanna were victorious.

The members of the group are now all dead but older residents will remember many of them as well as know their children and grandchildren so we will list them, giving married names also, where known:

Cora Wilson (Mrs. Walter S. Whipple), May Whipple (Mrs. Merton L. Ford), Grace Rowe (first Mrs. B. C. Lauren), Florence Matteson, Carrie Campbell, Annie Woodin (second Mrs. C. C. Colburn), May Woodin (Mrs. James Bears), Gertrude Patten (first Mrs. Douglas Miller), Bertha Westcott (Mrs. Charles Clark), Martha Murdock (Mrs. Donald Strong).

Lulu Emmons, Kittie Groat (Mrs. Clifford Williams), Jennie Houghtaling, Jessie Mickle, Nellie Mills (Mrs. S. Case Miller), Lena Scramling (first Mrs. Howard Day), Nancy Young (Mrs. M. G. Keenan), Georgia Boyd, May Wilson (Mrs. Herbert T. Jennings), Lillian Hufford (Mrs. Charles F. Baylis), Jessica Terwilliger and Harriet Frasier (Mrs. B. F. Sisson).

## VERSATILE DR. PARISH

After the Oneontan had told his troubles to the famed New York orthopedic surgeon, the expert asked him: "Why did you come to me when you have in your home town one of the best orthopedic men around, Dr. Edward J. Parish?"

Dr. Parish had the talent and the background. He had been trained in the Lorenz techniques and was one of the first men to use the live maggot method of treating bone infection. But Ed Parish had other fish to fry and, although he practiced medicine hereabouts for fifty-eight years, fame came to him in fields widely separate from the healing arts.

Small arms expert, genealogist, regional historian, fraternalist and public servant, as well as physician, Dr. Parish lived a life of great usefulness in the spheres of his interest.

Although a descendant of a pioneer Oneonta family, Edward J. Parish was born, in 1874, in New Salem, Albany County. His father was Dr. Charles Parish, a physician in Maryland for many years. Following graduation from Hartwick Seminary, he taught for a time and then entered Albany Medical College where he received his degree in 1896.

He came to Oneonta in 1909. He had entered the National Guard in 1905 as a medical officer but did not long confine his efforts to that field. He commanded the local unit for some years and was then transferred to the Ordnance Corps because of his great talent as a small arms instructor.

Dr. Parish was a fine rifle shot, once setting a record of fifty-two consecutive bullseyes at six hundred yards. He developed a method of instruction which made the local company one of the best shooting units in the country and which gave him nationwide fame. His manuals were used throughout the United States Army.

During World War I he personally taught over one thousand men to use the rifle effectively. He retired in 1938 with the rank of colonel after thirty-three years in the Guard.

He became interested in genealogy and county history and traveled throughout the country in pursuit of his hobbies. He was a founder of the Upper Susquehanna Historical Society and became its president. His most important accomplishment in this field was the finding of the Willard V. Huntington manuscript, a vast collection of historical notes concerning central New York. Dr. Parish located this in the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, and secured permission to bring it to Oneonta, where it was typed and made available to the public.

Dr. Parish was an ardent Kiwanian, serving as local president, district lieutenant-governor and attendance chairman of the international organization. During his travels through the country he visited nearly three hundred Kiwanis clubs. He was also a past exalted ruler of the Elks.

He was chairman of the Oneonta War Council during World War II and later became Civil Defense Director. He was city historian at one time and served as police commissioner on the Board of Public Safety.

Dr. Edward J. Parish died on January 20, 1955, and was buried in the Maryland Cemetery. Thus ended the career of a man whose gifts were as varied as his personality was colorful. He took much out of life and in return gave much to it. His kind does not come along too often.

## THE WOMAN'S CLUB

"The club has already enlisted in its support many of the brightest and best ladies of Oneonta and there is no doubt that under wise management it will be in every respect successful."

That was about all the Oneonta Herald said about it but in the same issue was the story of the burning of the Normal School on February 14, 1894, and the founding of a woman's club the day before seemed relatively unimportant. And yet it was an event of considerable significance since it represented the first step in the local emancipation of members of the fairer sex.

The position of women in the society of 1894 was far different than it is today. Women had no vote and no place in government and the working woman was a rarity. Woman's place was in the home and there she stayed. Her husband had his clubs and other interests but she had little to occupy her mind and energies outside of home and church.

Early in February of 1894 Mrs. Arthur E. Ford and Miss Grace Latimer decided to do something about this. They had been members of a sorority at Syracuse University and knew what women could do when organized. They enlisted the support of a Vassar woman, Mrs. George B. Baird, and held a meeting at her home at which it was decided to form a Woman's Club.

Invitations were issued and on February 13 the Oneonta Woman's Club was organized at a meeting in the Ford block. The following were elected as the first officers of the group of about one hundred women: President, Mrs. P. I. Bugbee; vice-president, Mrs. A. B. Tobey; recording secretary, Mrs. Orson Miller; corresponding secretary, Miss May Whipple; treasurer, Miss May Wilson; directors, Mrs. J. L. Miller, Mrs. Arthur E. Ford, Mrs. George B. Baird and Miss Grace Latimer.

Rooms were rented in the Ray block (where Gardner's shoe store now is) and a club atmosphere created. In 1898 a move was made to the second floor of the Oneonta Theatre structure and in 1918 the Club located in its present quarters in the Building and Loan Association building.

The Woman's Club prospered from the start, offering its members a wide variety of services. For instance, in 1900 weekly classes were held in English, history, harmony, art, ladies' chorus, mandolin and guitar, English literature, current topics, embroidery, American history, physical culture and cooking.

Later there were courses in Shakespeare, the theatre and travel. Many underprivileged children learned to sew at the Woman's Club. For years there was hardly a day or night when something of benefit to the members or to the community was not going on in the club rooms.

The present membership of over two hundred is proceeding in the tradition of over seventy years. The club gives a local scholarship, maintains a room at Fox Hospital and holds a variety of important and interesting events at its home.

The Oneonta Woman's Club joined the State Federation in 1895 and the General Federation in 1926. It has long had the reputation of being one of the most active and progressive units in the state and it is not to be doubted that this reputation will be enhanced as the years go by.



## ALVA SEYBOLT

In this age of specialization the shoemaker usually sticks to his last and the tailor to his goose, but in the old days there was many a jack-of-all-trades who, despite the adage, was apt to be a master of them all.

Such a one was Alva Seybolt, who as teacher, lawyer, surveyor, engineer and founder of the Oneonta public library system, led a life of great usefulness to his fellow man.

Alva Seybolt was the son of Paul and Antoinette Seybolt and was born in 1859 on a farm near Otisville, Orange County, which had been in the family for over two hundred years. He received his education in the Otisville schools, at the academy of Dr. Warren in Middletown and at Wyoming Seminary, Kingston, Pennsylvania.

He began teaching at the age of seventeen and followed that profession for ten years, during which he was principal of the Liberty Normal Institute and of the school at Monticello. While in these towns he studied law in the evenings and on Saturdays and holidays and was admitted to the bar in 1887. He came to Oneonta in January of the next year and opened an office for the practice of law.

In October of 1888 he was elected clerk of the Oneonta school district, an office which he held for fourteen years. Through his efforts a school library was created. This grew into the Oneonta Public Library, which was incorporated in 1893 and eventually became the Huntington Memorial Library. Alva Seybolt served on the Library Board for many years and can properly be called the father of our public library system.

In 1889 when Oneonta was laying its first pavement (wooden) Mr. Seybolt was named village engineer and acted in that capacity for eleven years. He did a large amount of private surveying and engineering until 1912 when his son Arthur joined the firm. The son was also a qualified surveyor as well as an attorney and thereafter he did most of this type of work.

Despite the time he spent in engineering and in activities for the public good, Mr. Seybolt built up a large and important law practice. For many years he was general attorney for the Empire State Dairy Company of Brooklyn, the third largest concern of its kind in the state, and for the big Ingalls Stone Company of Indiana.

He was the attorney for the estate of George I. Wilber and hence was a prominent figure in the famous Wilber will hearings before Surrogate Sheldon H. Close in 1923. The complex will disposed of an estate totalling over three million dollars and the legal proceedings took several weeks and involved nearly every attorney in the city.

Mr. Seybolt was an active participant in about everything pertaining to the welfare of the city. He was a trustee of the YMCA for more than thirty years and was one of the founders and long a vice-president of the Upper Susquehanna Historical Society.

He was a member of the Masonic Lodge and Chapter, of the Elks and of the Oneonta Club and Oneonta Country Club. For years he was an active Rotarian before being placed on the list of honorary members.

Alva Seybolt, who resided at 18 Elm Street during most of his life in Oneonta, died on August 24, 1943, and was buried in Riverside Cemetery. Arthur E. Seybolt, who conducts the legal firm of Seybolt and Seybolt, is a grandson.

## THE MEMORY FOREST

There are white birches and black birches, red oaks and white oaks, as well as a dozen kinds of maples. Scotch pines and white pines rub branches with Douglas and Norway spruces. There are American elms and Chinese elms, together with Irish junipers and Japanese walnuts. In short, about every variety of tree which will grow in this climate can be found in the Buckley Memory Forest.

Just what and where is this forest? you may ask, and understandably so, for few Oneontans have ever heard of this aboreum or of the trust fund which maintains it. As for its location, every time you drive out Route 23 you observe it, for it stands just to the left of the Cathedral Farms, now owned by Donald Sutter.

Henry H. Buckley was a prominent local citizen of yore who made a fortune from a factory on Broad Street which shipped custom made men's shirts throughout the country. Upon his retirement, he purchased, in 1914, considerable land, built a fine home and began the breeding of Guernsey cattle. He became nationally known in this field and once owned the world champion of the breed.

Mr. Buckley was a great lover of the out-of-doors and of all created things, especially trees. Seeking a good way to observe his seventy-fifth birthday, his wife, Jenny Hurlbutt Buckley, conceived the idea of a memory forest containing various kinds of trees donated by his relatives and friends.

The scheme appealed to Mr. Buckley's rather sentimental nature and work was begun. At first it was thought that a half acre of land would suffice but so great was the response that three acres of the estate were set aside. A dozen men worked for weeks planting trees, laying walks and erecting stone benches and a fountain.

Near the center of the forest was placed a huge granite boulder bearing a bronze plaque with this inscription: "Memory Forest. These trees were given to Henry Horatio Buckley to commemorate his 75th birthday, October 20, 1932, by his relatives and friends at the suggestion of his wife, Jenny Hurlbutt Buckley."

Soon after the creation of the Memory Forest, its beauty and popularity gave evidence of its value as an enterprise to be preserved and enlarged. With a desire to establish the future security of the forest, and at the same time render an educational service to friends and students, the Buckleys created in 1934 the Henry H. Buckley Foundation and endowed it liberally.

The underlying purpose of the Foundation was to encourage the study of tree and plant life, especially that native to New York State. Following the deaths of Mr. and Mrs. Buckley additional funds came to the trust, providing an income more than sufficient for its original purposes.

The principal work of the Foundation now is to provide financial help to needy students from this area at the College of Agriculture at Cornell and the College of Forestry at Syracuse. Each year several thousand dollars go into these scholarships.

The Foundation is managed by four trustees: Paul Shepherd, St. Louis, who is president; John K. Dunn, Oneonta, vice-president and secretary; James M. Shepherd, Wilton, Conn., and William Buckley, Milburn, N. J.

## NEW SCHOOL AND THE OLD

As we walked through the new senior high school the other day we couldn't help contrasting it with the building on Academy Street where we spent our high school days more than a half century ago. It, too, was new and as modern as they came at the time, but there the comparison stops.

We entered OHS in 1909 when the school had been in use but a year. The four story yellow brick and limestone structure was designed to accommodate five hundred grade and four hundred high school pupils. It was regarded as the last word in school construction.

As we strolled through the halls of the new school we noticed that each student had his private locker and we thought of the crowded coatrooms of yore where your new cap or rubbers might easily turn up missing. We glanced into classrooms and noticed how light and airy they were in contrast to the cubicles where we studied ancient history, French and geometry.

We came to the library and were amazed at its size, convenience and comfort. Back in our day the high school library consisted of a few little-used books at the back of the big third floor study hall.

As we inspected the well equipped science classrooms and laboratories we thought of the tremendous advances in chemistry and physics since the days when we were taught that the atom was the smallest indivisible portion of matter and the elements were immutable.

We looked at the metal and wood shops and the domestic science rooms, features which were entirely lacking in our day. We saw a room for the exclusive use of the school publications and reflected that The Echo staff used to have half a desk in the principal's office.

The sound proofed music rooms were a revelation. In our day there was a school orchestra but no band. Your parents had to buy your instrument and pay for your instruction by a private teacher.

We could wax pretty eloquent if we tried to describe the beautiful auditorium with its vast stage, its comfortable seats and its perfect acoustical qualities. It bears little resemblance to the auditorium in the old building, which had a small stage and terrible acoustics.

We saw pleasant dining areas and a kitchen such as might be found in the Waldorf. Here are prepared the luncheons for all the schools in the district. Our mind went back to the days when such kids as had to bring them, ate cold meals in the comfortless gymnasium.

Then came the physical education area, including the tremendous gymnasium and separate rooms for gymnastics nad wrestling. As we viewed these aids to the physical well being of every student we thought of the old bandbox gym and its cold water showers.

There were but two sports in our day—basketball and baseball, with the science teacher doubling as coach. If you played neither game, there was no physical education program at all for you.

Here we are at the end of our tour and we have said nothing of the perfect physical setting of the school or of the fine outdoor sports facilities.

Oneonta High School is our Alma Mater. We have always been proud of the old gal but never so much so as when we saw her the other day in her new abode.



## PARLOR PINKS

Orlo Epps was a Socialist in a day when a member of that political party was held in suspicion by the average citizen. And this despite the fact that the Socialist of the 'teen years was much less advanced in his thinking than is the liberal Democrat or Republican of today.

This architect, who designed many of Oneonta's buildings, was born in Elkhart, Indiana, in 1860 and was the son of Edward and Helen (Blanchard) Epps. He came to Oneonta when he was sixteen and continued his education here, graduating from the local high school in 1882. He studied architecture at Cornell and was graduated from that university in 1888.

Returning to Oneonta he became associated with Lyman H. Blend, a prominent builder, and practiced his profession here until 1894 when he became professor of mathematics and physics at the Agricultural and Mechanical College at Greensboro, North Carolina. He taught there and did architectural work in Greensboro and in Washington, D. C., until 1905 when he returned to Oneonta.

At first he engaged in the hardware business in the firm of Epps and Kerr but after the Wooden Row fire of 1908 he re-entered his profession and helped Mr. Blend design the row of brick blocks which replaced the burned structures.

In 1911 he opened his own office and operated as an architect until his death in 1926. Among the many buildings for which he prepared plans were the old State School at Delhi and the Morris Brothers, Elmore and West-Nesbitt feed mills and grain elevators.

He was a devoted member of the Fortnightly Club where he was highly respected for the originality and clarity of his views on issues of the day. A Mason for forty years, he had been Royal Arch High Priest.

Mr. Epps and Frank G. Sanford of the Oneonta Normal faculty were leaders in the small Socialist party of the city. They were theorists rather than hot-eyed advocates of radical social change. To George I. Wilber and other proponents of the status quo, however, any person who advocated such extreme measures as woman's suffrage, the direct election of United States senators and the referendum and recall was a dangerous individual.

We were unwittingly involved in a witch hunt which illustrates our point. Frank Sanford taught much more than manual training to the boys in the Normal School grades. From him they learned to ski, to swim and to handle a canoe and got their first appreciation of the satisfactions and benefits of life in the fields and woods.

He was a Socialist of deep conviction but never did he try to force his views upon his pupils. One night Lincoln Kellogg and ourself went to a Socialist meeting out of intellectual curiosity. We were harmed not one bit but Judge Kellogg, who was Lincoln's dad, was aghast. Soon Mr. Wilber, who was chairman of the local board of managers of the Normal, heard about the incident. Frank Sanford was not rehired for the next year.

The day in which Orlo Epps and Frank Sanford lived was not in the dark ages but in some ways it was not in the Age of Enlightenment either.

## AS IT WAS IN 1911

There were many people who thought that the administration of Mayor Albert Morris was spending altogether too much money. The budget for 1911 totalled \$38,155 and that was a lot of cash.

What would have been the thoughts of the good burghers, as they discussed the matter over their coffee or beer in Johnny Baker's restaurant if they could have known that fifty-four years later Oneonta would have a budget over twenty times that size although the city would have grown by only one-third?

There was one bright note, however. The tax levy would bring in about \$52,000 and so the city would be able to pay its bills without any aid whatever from either the state or federal government. The independent souls of those days wouldn't have wanted it any other way. Maybe it wasn't a great society but it was a good one in their estimation.

What else was happening in March of 1911 in our fledgling city? There were no great projects afoot. People were pursuing the even tenor of their ways in that golden year before World War I, dreaming of a better future to be sure but quite satisfied with the pleasures and opportunities which were at hand.

Frank H. Bresee, proprietor of the Oneonta Department Store, had announced that his oldest son, Lynn H., had entered the firm, which thereafter would be known as F. H. Bresee and Son. The up and coming concern had recently purchased the Ford and Ford block, which gave it three good sized stores.

The Oneonta Club (where the Lewis Funeral Home now is) had purchased a Victrola and had announced a series of concerts. The Victrola was the last word in phonographs and was quite a novelty. Just imagine hearing at will the voices of such singers as Caruso, Scotti, Schumann-Heink and Melba?

Oneonta High School was at the height of its winter extra-curricular activities. The basketball team, coached by Glenn Bulger, lost a squeaker, 13 to 9, to a rough Schenectady squad. Bill Stratton starred for the Yellow and White.

A two part school entertainment netted over \$300. The first section was a minstrel show with Principal R. E. Morris as the interlocutor. The end men were Clyde Benedict and Halsey Palmer. Banjos were twanged by Ray Maure and Herbert Getman while Montford Paige and Bill Warburton manipulated the squeeze boxes. There were songs by Annie Waters, Lila Hall and Ida and Breta Parks.

"My Lord in Livery", a sprightly comedy, constituted the second half of the performance. Playing leading roles were Hazel Bailey, Jack Capron, Ruth Wells, Marcia Saxton, William Stratton, Clyde Bresee and George Fletcher.

Business was booming on the D.&H. Within one twenty-four hour period 1,089 cars had been dispatched northward out of the yards, a record number. It was announced that the divisional offices would be moved from Albany to Oneonta.

Assemblyman Wheeler of Delaware County had introduced in the state Assembly a bill calling for the establishment at Delhi of a state school of agriculture and domestic science. The prospect for its passage was good.

Things were good in Oneonta in 1911 and getting better. The city was growing, slowly but steadily, and there was no apparent reason why that growth would not continue indefinitely. The automobile, which eventually would deal the railroad a mortal blow, was still somewhat of a plaything and hardly a threat to the existing methods of transportation.

## AN OLD TRAIN WRECK

It was a nerve wracking experience for the one hundred passengers and crew when a southbound Delaware and Hudson train left the tracks about a mile north of Sidney and plunged down a steep embankment on September, 1908, and it might easily have been a fatal one for many but, miraculously, no one was killed and only one person sustained injuries which were at all serious.

In a day when death strikes with great frequency on our crowded highways it might be well to reflect that in the long history of the D.&H. not a single passenger out of the countless thousands which the road carried in the past was ever killed or fatally injured. There were some narrow escapes but the proud record was maintained for over ninety years.

Train No. 2, running daily between Albany and Binghamton, normally left Oneonta at 10:25 a.m. but was about a half hour late on the morning in question. The southbound track on the bridge just north of Sidney was under repair and orders had been issued that all trains would stop and then use a crossover to the northbound main.

The engineer, Ami D. Dimmick of 17 Church Street, Oneonta, had not been given the order and was making about forty miles an hour when he saw the improvised cross-over track. He slammed on the brakes but the momentum was too great and the engine slid a short distance and then went over the twenty foot embankment. Three of the cars were pulled after it but the fourth, of the heavy vestibule type, remained on the track.

The engineer clung to the reverse lever, which he had pulled partially over, and remained in the cab, which landed on its top near the foot of the bank. He extricated himself from the smashed cab and went in search of his fireman, George A. Prindle of 57 Main Street, Oneonta. The latter was thrown clear as the tender turned over but not before he had been painfully, but not seriously burned by steam from the injector, which was working at the time.

The express messenger, E. K. Hitchcock of Albany, was the sole occupant of the first car. He was thrown through the open door but suffered only a broken rib and some bruises. The next car, a combination baggage and mail coach, also fell on its side but was prevented from sliding farther by a cob house of old ties half way up the embankment. Charles Everts of Binghamton, the veteran baggage man, and the mail clerk, Charles Burlingame, remained in the car, suffering only bruises and shock.

The smoking car was pulled from the roadbed but remained upright with the front end half way down the bank and the rear end near the rails. This car was well filled with passengers, all of whom were catapulted from their seats and piled up in the front end of the coach. Almost unbelievably, not one suffered more than minor cuts and bruises. Conductor E. E. Pratt and Trainman R. A. Mead, Jr., both of Oneonta, were in this car.

The last coach, containing about fifty people, most of them women and children, remained on the track. Some of the passengers were pitched from their seats but again no one was seriously hurt.

Wrecking crews were summoned and a temporary track was constructed around the wreck. By 3 p.m., less than four hours after the accident, traffic was again moving over the line.



## WHAT HAPPENED?

George W. Fairchild slept well in his London hotel suite that night in 1891. He had just sold the English rights to the Eckerson printing press for \$100,000 and the money was safely on deposit with Barings. With capital now available, work could start at once on the factory which the Eckerson Printing Press Company planned to build near the railroad tracks on Hunt Street in Oneonta.

As he opened the copy of the London Times which lay on his breakfast table the next morning, a headline, "Barings Fails", caught the eye of the embryo capitalist. He read the story with consternation. The famous banking house, which had seemed as solid as the Rock of Gibraltar, had closed its doors and it appeared that the loss to shareholders and depositors would be nearly complete.

Mr. Fairchild suddenly became apprehensive. Several large cities were seeking the plant with offers which heretofore Oneonta could not meet and now it looked as if the bustling village on the Susquehanna would lose what promised to be an important industry.

What happened next is shrouded in mystery. Suddenly the Oneonta Herald, although owned by Fairchild, ceased printing a single word about the Eckerson Company.

In July of 1888 D. L. Eckerson of Worcester received a patent on a perfecting printing press of completely new design. This machine, most remarkable for its day, could print in two colors on both sides of paper at one time from flat beds of type at the rate of several thousand impressions per hour. The paper was fed from a roll and was automatically cut as it was printed.

The press had been thoroughly tested and had aroused great interest in the industry. Fairchild saw great possibilities in it and organized a company to manufacture and market the machine. The patent was purchased from Eckerson for a one-ninth interest in the company, known as G. W. Fairchild and Company. Fairchild and seven other Oneonta men, including George Kirkland and Dr. M. L. Ford, held stock in the concern.

Arrangements were made with the Cohoes Iron Company to manufacture the presses, orders for which began pouring in from all parts of the country. Meanwhile, Eckerson was working on a newspaper press of the same design and this was placed on the market late in 1891, the first being purchased by a Corning paper.

In March of 1899 the company was reorganized and became the Eckerson Printing Press Company of Oneonta, Inc. It was capitalized at \$300,000 and its officers were George W. Fairchild, president, and Charles F. Shelland, secretary-treasurer. The directors were Frank Gould, William H. Morris and Albert Morris of Oneonta and D. H. Clement of New York City. Other heavy Oneonta stockholders were Dr. Merton L. Ford and Charles W. Lewis, Jr.

A press was shipped to England and then Mr. Fairchild made the trip to London which had such disastrous results. In its issue of December 24, 1891, the Herald said that whether the concern would remain in Oneonta would be decided at the annual meeting of the company, which would be held at the Windsor Hotel on January 9, 1892.

There the story ends. We searched the columns of the Herald for two years after that date and could not find one mention of the Eckerson Company. Was the patent sold and the corporation liquidated? Probably so, but who knows?

## EARLY SETTLERS

We have previously discussed the Scramling, VanDerwerker, Walling and Emmons families who were among the first to inhabit this portion of the Susquehanna valley but there were many others who helped clear the wilderness and create a civilization hereabouts.

The first settlements in what is now the Town of Oneonta were on the Plains. Henry Scramling was the first to locate there, coming from German Flats in the Mohawk Valley in 1773. He left during the Revolution but returned after the conflict, bringing with him his brothers, George and David, and his brothers-in-law, John and David Young. Their farms were not far from the mouth of Otego Creek.

Jacob VanWoert came from Albany around 1810 and cleared a farm on the Plains where his descendants lived for many years. Elisha Shepherd migrated from New England at an early date and also settled on the Plains, where his sons in after years conducted a variety of businesses, including a brickyard and a famous distillery under the hill near where River Street starts its climb to join Oneida.

Asel Marvin migrated from Vermont in 1791 and first settled on the Plains, later moving to a large tract of wild land on the Oneonta Creek about two miles from the village. He was a builder and lumberman, rafting timber down the river to Baltimore for twenty-two consecutive years. When he moved into the creek valley, the country across the hills to Laurens was an almost unbroken wilderness.

Elihu Gifford came with his four sons from Albany in 1803, first settling in West Oneonta and then moving in 1806 to the Oneonta Creek valley. At about the same time Josiah Peet and Ephriam Farrington settled on the creek. About 1804 David Yager came from Greenbush and purchased a farm, to be followed by his father, Solomon Yager. Frederick Bornt was another early settler in this region.

Colonel William Richardson settled further up the creek at a somewhat later date and built a sawmill and a gristmill, around which a thriving hamlet known as Richardson's Mills developed. This tiny community was wiped out when the upper reservoir was built.

Johannes Blend, of Palatinate blood as were so many of the early settlers, came into the West Street valley around 1800. John and Nicholas Beams, Abram Houghtaling, Elias Brewer, Baltus Kimball, Simeon Walling and James Young were early settlers in the eastern end of the town.

In about 1790 Thomas Morenus and Peter Swart settled on the south side of the river and were soon followed by John Fritts, Andrew Parish, David Scramling, and Thomas Blanchard. At about this time Frederick Brown came from Fulton and settled on the farm which he later sold to Eliakim R. Ford. His house, standing about where the Palace Theatre is today, was the first frame house in what is now Oneonta. In 1780 Aaron Brink built a large log house about where the viaduct stands. This was the first hotel in the community.

These are some of the men who, through sacrifice and unrelenting toil, founded our community. Beside each was a woman, sharing his hardships and dangers and bearing the children who would develop what their parents had started.

As we contemplate our manifold blessings let us not forget that what we now enjoy did not fall like manna from heaven but was bought with the blood, sweat and tears of those who preceded us in this valley.

## FIRST AUTO RACE

As the cars rounded the home turn and came down the stretch toward the finish line the driver of the machine near the rail dangled a foot outside the car. His vehicle edged ahead and then pulled steadily away from his opponent, winning easily. The foot motion had been Roy Whipple's signal to his rival that he wanted to win this one since he had a friend in the grandstand.

The contest, which was a feature of the Oneonta Fair in 1900, was the first auto race ever held hereabouts. Few people in the big crowd had ever seen a horseless carriage in operation and the thrilling race, which no one but the contestants knew was fixed, was the talk of the town.

The automobiles which engaged in this titanic struggle were steam Locomobiles. They looked very much like rubber-tired buggies, having no tops, windshields or fenders. The dashboards were of patent leather and had evidently been made for buggies since they showed screw holes for whip sockets.

The engine generated two and a half horsepower which was transmitted to the rear wheels by means of a bicycle chain running on sprockets. The brakes held in only one direction which meant that if the engine stopped while you were going up a hill, you immediately started down, backward.

The driver, with the steering tiller in his hands, sat directly over the boiler, which carried from two hundred to three hundred pounds of steam. It was small consolation to know that it was covered with two or three layers of steel piano wire to keep the pieces from flying in case of an explosion.

The horse frightening contraption used gasoline for fuel and you got it at a drugstore, if the stuff happened to be in stock. The Locomobile would run twenty miles on three gallons of gas, which was the capacity of the fuel tank, and used a gallon of water a mile. The water tank had to be refilled after each ten miles of running.

The fearless pilots in the great race were Roy W. Whipple and Louis R. Clinton, both of Binghamton. Mr. Whipple resided in Oneonta from 1885 until 1896. He attended the local schools and was a member of the famous Relief Coffee Corps, which was an auxiliary of the Oneonta Fire Department and was quite an unique outfit.

He went through the soapbox cart, high bicycle and safety bicycle phases and when the automobile made its appearance he decided that it had a future as a means of transportation and might just possibly provide a means of making a living. He bought his first car in 1898, it being the forty-seventh sold by the Locomobile Company, which was the first concern to get the manufacture of self-propelled vehicles on a commercial basis in the United States.

Mr. Whipple opened an auto store in Binghamton in 1899, the first establishment of its kind in this section and possibly the pioneer in the state. This was a widely known concern for many years.

In the fall of 1900 he and Mr. Clinton contracted to put on supposedly competitive races at the fairs in Oneonta, Sidney, Norwich, Afton, Sherburne, Owego and Binghamton. They guaranteed to circle the fairground tracks faster than any running horse, trotter or other animal or forfeit the agreed fee.



## WHAT WE WORE

The thermometer stood at zero the other morning when we went out for breakfast. As we walked along we gave a thought to how less warmly clad we, and everybody else, were than would have been the case fifty or sixty years ago.

Instead of T-shirt and shorts our foundation garment would have been long, woolen, one piece underwear, scratchy and uncomfortable. Our suit would have been of heavy material and we would have worn a vest.

Instead of low shoes and toe rubbers we would have had high shoes and heavy galoshes. Our overcoat would have been ankle length and heavy, perhaps fur lined. A scarf and cap with ear laps would have completed the costume.

The young boy of a half century ago would have been dressed just as warmly as his father but in different style. Hugging him closely was that same infernal union suit. He wore an underwaist which buttoned down the front and to which were attached the garters which held up his long black ribbed stockings. Today boys wear long pants as soon as the triangular variety are discarded but in our day kids wore knickers until they were half way through high school.

The women of the day wore layer upon layer of apparel. We are no authority upon their clothing but it so happens that exactly half of our ancestors were women so we have some slight knowledge of the subject. Furthermore, we have heard tell.

We hesitate to discuss the nethermost feminine garments; suffice it to say that they were rather more substantial than today. Over them our fair lady was encased from hips to shoulders in a medieval garment constructed of whalebone and other unyielding substances and known as a corset. It was unhealthy and uncomfortable but fashion dictated its use.

A corset cover came next and then a high necked shirtwaist (remember those daring peekaboo affairs?). The floor length skirt overlaid perhaps three petticoats, at least one of them flannel. Cotton stockings, high button shoes, heavy overcoat, picture hat and fur muff, and King Frost was successfully defied.

Back in those days heavy clothing was necessary for winter comfort. There were not many automobiles and few used them in winter. Almost everybody walked to work or to the stores for their shopping.

Men purchased their clothes at Carr and Bull's, the Department Store, Herrieff's or Colburn's or, if they wanted to go as high as \$15, they would go to Jonah Holdredge, John Burke or Ed Hirshey, select the material and have the suit tailored to order. If they wanted the utmost in sartorial elegance, they would have the weskit piped with white braid.

Ladies made most of their clothing themselves or had a dressmaker do the work. Your mother would go to Sisson's, Gurney's or Wilder's and select the material from the huge bolts of cloth which crowded the shelves. Then she would choose the trimmings she needed, the braid and thread, the buttons and bows.

She would take the material to one of a score or more dressmakers or a seamstress would come to her home to do the work.

## *SOME ELECTION FIGHTS*

"We challenge the Herald, the Star, or any of the Republican candidates to produce figures to show that at present there is not a deficit in the general fund." "Baloney" was the reply to this statement which appeared in the weekly Oneonta Press and proof was presented that there was actually a comfortable surplus in the municipal coffers.

This was but one incident in the bitterly contested municipal election of 1911. The Oneonta Star was professedly independent but had Republican leanings while the weekly Herald staunchly supported the GOP. The Press was just as rabidly Democratic and its editor was Chester A. Miller, who kept a container of vitriol near his inkstand. When the two weeklies clashed, their columns crackled with flame and there was so much smoke that the issues often became obscured.

Albert Morris' term as the first mayor of the young city was ending and the Republicans had nominated Frank D. Blodgett, a professor of Latin at the State Normal School, to succeed him. The Democratic nominee was George L. Gibbs, a perennial candidate.

Mayor Morris had had his troubles with an evenly divided Common Council. The three Democratic aldermen, Fred J. Clark of the First Ward, Merlin J. Platt of the Fifth and Edward J. House of the Sixth were all running for re-election. Several miles of brick pavement had been laid in 1909 and 1910 and the Democratic pitch was that there had been dirty work not only at the crossroads but all up and down the streets.

It was claimed that the work was improperly done and that the \$80,000 bond issue was illegal. The Republicans asked why the three aldermen had not once raised their voices while the work was going on. They also charged that Platt had worked on the paving job and had been paid for his labor although he was an alderman. In the midst of the controversy the pay records of the Board of Public Works vanished from the office of City Clerk Everett Holmes.

Professor Blodgett kept above the quarrel, not mentioning it in his campaign talks. The election resulted in a near Republican sweep, the Democrats salvaging only the alderman from the First Ward.

There was another slam bang contest in 1933 when Louis M. Baker, the Democratic-Fusion candidate, opposed Mayor Francis H. Marx, who was running for re-election on the Republican ticket. Dr. Marx had had a running fight with his commissions for some time. He charged that despite his pleas for economy they had refused to cut their budgets.

Such men as M. G. Keenan, M. F. Leamy and John J. Burke resigned and William H. Hoffman and Ralph S. Wyckoff failed of re-appointment. Things came to a head when Mayor Marx dismissed Alva Seybolt, Arthur M. Curtis, Roscoe C. Briggs and Mrs. Dorman Baldwin, all prominent citizens, from the Library Board.

At this juncture of affairs Louis M. Baker organized a Fusion party, secured Democratic endorsement and joined battle with Marx. The Star gave equal space to each side but the Herald (then owned by the Star) was decidedly pro-Marx.

The regular Republican slate won. It was a short fight but it was a good one while it lasted and it took the minds of the citizens off the rigors of the Great Depression.

## BUSY COMMUNITY

Oneonta was a busy place one hundred and fifteen years ago with a surprisingly large number of business, professional and crafts people for a population of but a few hundred.

In the census of 1850 there were fifty-nine such men listed, some with occupations no longer followed in this region. For instance, Samuel Beach is listed as a "danguanan", a word to be found in no dictionary, old or new. It is probable that what was meant was daguerrotype artist, meaning one who took pictures by the pioneer photographic method.

In the list are many men whose descendants still live hereabouts, as well as some whose stay here was only a resting period on their westward trek.

At the time there was a distillery located on the site of the Bern store on Broad Street. It was then operated by Mason Chamberlain. Bradford Chamberlain is also listed as a distiller.

The big role the horse played in the economy of the era is shown by the number of occupations made necessary by its use. Horace McCall and John Evins were wagon makers and Turner McCall was listed as a carriage maker. Worthington Wright and Henry Newland were harness makers. The blacksmiths were Samuel Walling, James Wilde, William Wilde, James Pendleton, Herman Alger, Perry Bennett and Henry Whitney.

Robert Hopkins, whose shop was where the Windsor Hotel formerly stood, was a chairmaker and William McCrum was listed as a warehouse manufacturer. What this means is not quite clear. Mr. Crum was a furniture dealer who doubtless made some of the products which he sold.

Samuel Cutshaw, Nathan Bennett, Merritt Spooner and John Avery were shoemakers while David Bennett, Anthony White, Ellis C. Seymour, Munson Watkins, Ezra N. Noles and Orrin B. Clark were carpenters.

Samuel S. Newman and William S. Fritts were tailors, Isaac Peters and Jairus Brewer grocers and Samuel N. Chauncey a miller, the proprietor for a short time of the old mill on the site of the Elmore Milling Company.

There were six coopers, William Patison, John Barnes, Caleb Potter, John Ingalls and William H. and Henry Schofield. Joseph Whitney was a hatter and George A. Chamberlain is listed simply as a manufacturer.

There were three physicians at the time, Drs. Samuel H. Case, William H. Whitney and Hosea Hamilton. The latter's home and office stood where the Sears, Roebuck store now is. There were two clergymen, E. S. Holland and Absente B. Earl. No attorney appears on the list.

Henry I. Dunham and John M. Watkins were innkeepers. There was a goldsmith, David Dibble, and an insurance agent, David Evans, possibly the same David Evans who was listed in later years as a tailor and a veterinarian.

Martin VanLeuvan was a constable and Harris Johnson and John Fink were tinnerns. Listed as merchants were Solon Huntington, Samuel J. Cook, Elisha Shepherd, D. H. Yager, E. R. Ford and his eldest son, Dewitt Ford.



## DESTRUCTIVE FIRE

The six horses, recognized as among the foremost trotting thoroughbreds in the east, never had a chance. Before the first fire truck reached the Stanford stables back of the old William H. Morris house at the corner of Elm and Walnut Streets where St. Mary's Parochial School now stands, the animals were dead, stifled by the heavy smoke.

The fire, which broke out at about 12:15 on the afternoon of March 1, 1923, while the trainer, Arthur B. Martin, and his four assistants were having lunch, killed the valuable horses, gutted the elaborately equipped stables and destroyed thousands of dollars worth of sulkies, harness and other racing gear.

E. M. Stanford, proprietor of the Hotel Oneonta, had bought the property following the death of Mrs. Morris in 1920. He used the fine old home as a residence and had remodeled the carriage house behind into one of the best racing stables in the country. Harness racing was his hobby and he had acquired a string of trotters who could hold their own on any of the eastern tracks.

In those days sulky racing did not have the widespread vogue that it has now but there were many devotees of the sport. The county fair was still a flourishing institution and there were the Grand Circuit races. During the preceding year Mr. Stanford had trotted his string on many of the leading tracks in New York and New England.

The fire was most untimely. The property had been sold to St. Mary's parish and possession was to be given on April 1. Mr. Stanford was moving his family to the hotel and had made arrangements to transfer the horses to the barns on the Oneonta Fair grounds during the next week.

Of the six horses destroyed four were owned by Stanford, one by Martin, the trainer, and the other by a Mr. Lawrence of New York City. The building was fully covered but only about \$5,000 insurance was carried on the horses, whose value was estimated at upwards of \$35,000. Mr. Stanford therefore suffered a considerable financial loss.

Silky Mack, the best known of the string, had won thirteen out of seventeen starts the preceding year. This horse had stepped a trial mile in 2:06¼, doing the last half in one minute, and had done 2:10¼ in a race, not particularly fast time today but pretty good in 1922.

The fastest horse in the stable was Captain Mack, who is said to have trotted miles in 1:58½, 2:00 and 2:03½, which would be very good time today. Bingen Rivers was another promising Stanford horse. This stallion had done a trial mile in 2:09¼ and had made a mark of 2:14½ in his maiden race.

Mr. Stanford regarded Son of Peter as the most promising of his horses. This animal had done little racing but had been entered in several stake events during the coming season.

Biarad, owned by Mr. Lawrence, was a promising trotter, while George W., the trainer's horse, had a mark of 2:13¼, had been timed in better than 2:09 and had won three races in as many successive days.

Present day harness racing aficionados may look down their noses at these horses but forty years ago the sport was not as refined as it is today.

## A GOOD MAN

The footprints which most men leave upon the sands of time are discernible for but a short time. Occasionally one comes along whose mark is so deep that it does not vanish during the lifetimes of those who knew him.

Such a man was Frank Sanford, teacher, artist, lover of the outdoors, keen analyst of the adolescent mind and a man who exerted a deep influence upon the lives of many of the boys of my generation.

To those he was, during their boyhood and adolescent years, "Professor Sanford" or "Pop" (behind his back), a man slightly feared, greatly respected and much beloved. As his "boys" grew to manhood they kept in touch with him wherever he was and were much in his company whenever he visited Oneonta. He had become "Sandy", their confidante and counsellor, a man of dry and gentle wit and of good conversation.

Frank Goodwin Sanford was born in Portland, Maine, in 1873. My first contact with him was in 1906 when I was in the sixth grade at Center Street, then the training school for the State Normal embryo teachers. He had just come to Oneonta to teach manual training in the Normal system.

He was a good teacher even if his boiling point was very low. Probably few of his students ever qualified as expert workers in wood but no boy left one of his courses without learning at least one thing—that every job in life should be done to the best of one's ability. Frank Sanford had full tolerance for the limitations of a boy; none whatever for his careless work.

His influence ranged far beyond the classroom. My friends and myself spent far more time with him after school hours than we did in his workshop. He taught us to swim, to ski and to handle a canoe and gave us our first appreciation of the satisfactions and benefits of life in the open.

Boy Scouting was in its infancy during much of his teaching life and he satisfied the juvenile urge for the things Scouting now gives. Among his boys was many an Eagle Scout, in fact if not in name.

An unforgettable summer for me was that of 1911 when "Sandy" took Augustus Gurney, Earle Elmore, Herbert Getman, Lincoln Kellogg and myself to his native Maine. There we spent six weeks camping, swimming, hiking, studying plant and animal life and canoeing upon innumerable lakes and streams.

But "Sandy's" influence struck even deeper than that. Despite the fact that what he taught was practical and prosaic, he knew that men live not by bread alone. For many a boy, including myself, he set doors ajar, doors which opened into the realms of poetry, or worthwhile prose, of music and of art.

He had firm convictions about many matters of social and economic import. No one can say that he ever tried to force his views upon his pupils but he did encourage independence of thought and intellectual curiosity.

Frank Sanford left Oneonta about 1913, witch-hunted out of the Normal because of his extreme political views, which included belief in such dangerous things as woman's suffrage and direct election of United States senators. Thereafter he taught in many communities but never lost touch with his Oneonta boys nor they with him.

He died in St. Augustine, Florida, in 1957 at the age of 84. His memory is green in the hearts of many men of my generation, not only in Oneonta but, I believe, in other places where he had taught.

## *SCHOOL LIFE OF YORE*

During the week of its dedication the new Senior High School was much on our mind and of course the old school was in our thoughts and we made the inevitable comparisons and contrasts.

In another story we spoke of some of the physical differences between the old school on Academy Street and the new plant in its picturesque location on East Street above the filter plant.

However, a school is more than a building and the equipment which it holds. There are students and there are teachers and there are the myriad activities which take place within its walls. Let's do a little random reminiscing with some contrasts made between what was and what now is.

Our class of 1913 numbered fifty, the largest graduating group up to that time. The class of 1965 at OHS had two hundred and fifty boys and girls and yet the city is only twenty per cent larger today than it was in 1913. Of course many students now come from outside the city but in our day there were pupils from places miles away, drawn by the excellence of OHS compared with the poorly equipped village high schools of the period.

Two factors tending toward larger enrollment are the increased minimum age for school attendance and the realization that a high school education is absolutely needed in these times.

We shall draw no comparison between teachers of today and those of yore. The present OHS faculty is loaded with good teachers but so was the faculty of 1913. We had such mentors as Ella Briggs and Harriet Stevens, Albert Fitzelle and Richard Morris and teachers like those are hard to find.

There are differences, however. In 1913 there was not a man in the elementary school system (except the superintendent of schools), either as a teacher or administrator. Even in the high school there were comparatively few male instructors. Another interesting fact is that throughout our school days, from kindergarten through high school, we did not have one female teacher who was married. Today approximately seventy-five per cent of the female teachers in the Oneonta system have been to the nuptial altar. Therein lies an interesting sociological fact which we are not foolhardy enough to explore here.

There are probably few teachers today in the system who do not have a bachelor's degree and there are many masters and a doctor or two. In our day degrees were as scarce as hen's teeth. Knowledge of a subject and the ability to impart it were the criteria for a teacher in that dark age, but that is another subject which we shall not pursue lest we draw upon our head the wrath of the gods of education.

We do not believe that the kids of today play the pranks in school that we did and that is probably all to the good. We recall incidents like fitting the statue of Venus in the upper hall with a green corset on St. Patrick's Day, putting sneeze powder in the chapel song books and filling the study hall inkwells with foul smelling carbon bisulphide.

Our jokes were doubtless annoying to the teachers and caused them some inconvenience but no boy thought of performing acts of vandalism. Of course we skidded around a corner one day and broke the tail off Paul Revere's horse but that was a pure accident.

It was fun going to school in the good old days but we doubt not that it is just as much fun in the good new days.



## ONEONTA IN 1884

You may have seen the picture. A copy hung for some time in the lobby of the Hotel Oneonta and there is one in the New York room in Huntington Library as well as several in homes around the city, including one in our apartment.

But this is not a mystery story so we will tell you now that the picture in question is a lithograph of the village of Oneonta as it was in 1884, which happens to be the year our parents settled here. It is a fascinating picture since it shows every street and every building in what was then a community of about 4,500 inhabitants.

It looks like a photograph taken from the top of Franklin Mountain but examination will show that it is a drawing with perhaps a map of the period as a guide. The portrayal of the community itself is remarkably accurate but in sketching the hills back of the village the artist's perspective went somewhat awry.

Each house is drawn with some fidelity as a look with a magnifying glass at those structures which are now standing today will indicate. The artist, L. R. Burleigh of Troy, must have spent many hours of painstaking labor.

The year 1884 was in the middle of one of the most prosperous decades in Oneonta's history. Many streets were laid out, hundreds of dwellings were erected and the population of the village doubled during the 1880s. The railroad shops expanded greatly, providing steady work for hundreds of men.

The Neahwa Park area was in 1884 nothing but tree studded greensward which was pretty apt to be flooded each spring. The gas works had just been built but that was the only activity south of the tracks. The Susquehanna was spanned by a long covered bridge.

The only streets in the Sixth Ward were River, Luther, Burnside, Wilcox, Fonda, Ann, West Broadway, Parish, Gilbert and Miller. The entire section north of the tracks and west of Fonda Avenue, which later would be the scene of much railroad activity, was in 1884 rather heavily wooded wasteland.

The center of Oneonta had more or less found its pattern by this time and most of the present streets were in existence. Main Street was pretty much built up from the railroad grade crossing (the viaduct was twenty years in the future) to Maple Street but most of the buildings then standing have been replaced with different structures. The Ford Stone Mansion and the D. F. Wilber brick house next to it can be seen in the picture as well as the white frame Presbyterian church with its graceful spire.

Farther up Main, the area from Otsego Street eastward to the hill which Third Street now climbs was the large orchard of the Walling Mansion which stood where the United Presbyterian church now is. The whole Walling Heights section was pasture land.

The Normal School had not yet been built and Maple Street ended at the Yager dairy farm where Old Main now is. Ford Avenue and Elm Street went only to Spruce. Cedar Street had been laid out but there were no houses on it in 1884.

West Street, called "the hill road to Laurens", had only a few houses beyond Center and the hillsides which are now dotted with new homes were then wood lots and pasture land.

## HEADS AND HOUSES

If people had no bumps on their heads, the house at the corner of Grand and Division Streets would not be octagonal in shape. At least that is an assumption that appears to be warranted by the facts in the case.

Stephen Bull, who erected the dwelling in 1870, was one of the few people in Oneonta who succumbed to the craze for octagonal buildings that swept the northeastern states around the middle of the nineteenth century. There was once a small eight-sided house at East Street just beyond the city limits but the Bull house is the only one of its kind still standing in the city.

It all started when Orson Squire Fowler and Henry Ward Beecher, who were studying theology at Amherst College in the early 1840s, heard an Austrian scientist lecture in Boston on a new subject, Phrenology, which taught that character and personality traits could be determined by the proper interpretation of the protuberances on a person's skull.

The students returned to college and did a lucrative business in practicing the new science upon their fellows. Beecher eventually resumed his religious studies but Fowler continued his reading of bumps. Upon graduation he went to New York, opened an office and was soon making money hand over head. He published a book entitled "Phrenology Proved, Illustrated and Applied", which took America by storm and went through sixty-two editions. Other books followed and their sale was tremendous.

Wealthy beyond his early dreams, Fowler decided to build a mansion on the east bank of the Hudson River that would symbolize his rise from a poor farm boy to a successful scientist, author and lecturer. He began to study houses and finally came up with the idea of an octagonal dwelling.

He started his dream house in 1848 and at the same time wrote a book called "A Home for All, or the Gravel Wall and Octagon Mode of Building." The book sold well, the views he expressed were accepted and soon homes, barns, schools and churches of octagon design began to appear all over the northeast, some of wood and others of brick or stone.

Fowler argued that a sphere was not only the most beautiful of all geometric forms but it enclosed the most usable space. Since the octagon was the practical form most like the sphere, he contended that it should be used, going on to explain that eight surfaces allowed for the reception of more sunlight and eliminated the dark and useless square corners.

From 1850 to 1853 was the big period for the octagon structure. Houses sprang up in nearly every community. Octagonal schoolhouses were built because Fowler contended that they provided more sociability, better light and superior acoustics. Octagonal churches were erected and octagonal barns were built with the stalls arranged around a central well.

Few of these odd structures remain around here. There is a small house on the back road to Milford and another in Unadilla village. There are several eight-sided barns in Delaware and Chenango Counties.

And it all came about because people had bumps on their craniums, were curious about them and Orson Fowler knew their meaning, or at least claimed that he did.

## FIRST FIRE DEPARTMENT

"Firemen, save my home!!" cried Mrs. Jane Ingalls as she knelt, bare headed and bare armed, in the snow before her flaming house on Chestnut Street that cold winter's day in the 1870s.

But, alas, there were no firemen to help her. A number of neighbors and passersby had organized a bucket brigade to carry water from a nearby well but there was no pumper to feed it to. The members of the only fire company in town, the Resolutes, were desperately trying to free their hand drawn and operated engine from the deep drifts on the Chestnut Street hill (much steeper than now).

A team of horses finally pulled the pumper out of the snow and got it to the scene of the fire just in time to save the cellar walls. This small tragedy taught the village a lesson and soon there was agitation to buy a steam fire engine.

The village board of trustees, composed of Anthony White, John Primmer, Stephen Bull, Matteson Bissell and Thomas Rockwell, voted in 1875 to buy a steamer and several manufacturers sent machines to Oneonta for testing. The trials took place near the Ford pond where Penney's now is.

Each of the engines could throw a stream higher than the steeple of the old Presbyterian church but the trustees selected the one made by the Button Company. This steamer, which was named the Colonel W. W. Snow, gave faithful service until well into the present century.

Reservoirs to hold water for the fire engine were built at the corners of Church and Cherry, Main and West, and Maple and Walnut and on Main Street opposite Grove. These were about fifty feet long, ten feet wide and ten feet deep, built of brick and arched over the top. They were kept filled by the steamer with water from nearby streams and wells.

Early in 1876 Oneonta Steam Engine Company No. 1 was organized with twenty-nine charter members. George A. Hunter was the foreman and Walter Scott his assistant. This was followed by Centennial Hose Company No. 1 (later the Lewis Hose Company) with J. H. Ostrom as foreman and Harlow E. Bundy as assistant.

The village seemed determined to have a real fire department at last and a third company, the Oneonta Hook and Ladder Company No. 4, was formed. Reuben L. Fox was head of this outfit with A. C. Moody as assistant foreman.

A fire house was needed to house the equipment and one was constructed on the site of the present Municipal Building. This was the two story structure so familiar to generations of Oneontans. A contemporary writer had this to say about it: "Such architecture! Neither Colonial, Renaissance, nor Ionic, but a cross between a drygoods box and a hole in the wall."

James H. Keyes (grandfather of Walter M. Goldsmith) was chosen as overall head of the three companies and was in reality the first chief of the Oneonta Fire Department. Collis P. Huntington, who has been accorded that honor, was foreman of the first fire company in the hamlet (1848) but had only a few men and a single piece of apparatus under his command.



## LET'S GO BACK TO 1904

If a teen-ager of today could be transported back sixty years to 1904, he would probably think that he was on another planet. Imagine his thoughts when he found that there were no movies, no TV, no radio and no record players!

He certainly would not like the fact that there were no parks, no swimming pool, no public tennis courts, no softball diamonds and few automobiles. The girls would be aghast to learn that no respectable woman ever drank or smoked in public and that a female appearing on the streets in slacks, let alone shorts, would undoubtedly have been arrested for disorderly conduct.

And yet millions of boys and girls grew up in such an age and had a pretty good time doing it. And their elders didn't complain much either. We have no desire to go back to those days but are simply pointing out the fact that life did exist on this planet before the day of the motor car and the movie, the juke box and the idiot tube.

What was happening hereabouts around the first of May in 1904? It had been a backward spring. There was snow on the ground as late as April 18 and every street in the village, except those few in the business district which had been recently paved with brick, was inches deep in mud.

The outside roads were in even worse shape. There was not a single hard road in the county in 1904 but things were looking up. The state legislature had just appropriated a million and a half dollars for roads and Otsego would receive \$12,500 for the construction of one and a third miles of macadam from the Oneonta village line to Emmons.

E. R. Ford, Jr., had been informed by Congressman George J. Smith that a bill calling for a new postoffice here would not be acted on that year. This bad news was somewhat offset by the fact that Governor Benjamin B. Odell, Jr., had just signed a measure adding \$12,500 to the \$50,000 already appropriated for a new armory in Oneonta.

The ads of the period indicated that prices were low. Willahan's bakery was selling bread for five cents a loaf and rolls for a nickel a dozen. The Oneonta Department Store offered work shoes from \$1.25 to \$1.75 a pair and the dress variety from two to three dollars. The latter were of the patent (sic) leather kind (there were gremlins in the printshop then as now).

Carr and Bull was advertising men's suits at from \$7.50 to \$18 and at G. Bligh's your mother could buy you, if you were a "little man" of from two and a half to nine, a Buster Brown suit, collar and tie for as little as five dollars. We thought at the time that there should be a law against the manufacture of those affronts to the dignity of boyhood but mothers thought that they looked so darned cute.

If prices were low, so were wages. The D.&H. was seeking fifty men to tear down old cars and was offering from six to ten dollars a week. The Glove Company had steady work for boys and girls. They could earn two or three dollars a week and be kept out of mischief in the bargain.

There were parking problems then as now. Most people walked to school, to work and on shopping tours but the out of town shopper had to have a place to park his horse and buggy. Merchants didn't want autos on the streets at all. They frightened horses and were just an infernal nuisance and a passing fad.

## *BOSS OF THE G.O.P.*

There was a time when Republicanism was a religion in Otsego County and when the party faithful seldom lost in their crusades against the Democratic infidels. Among the high priests of the cult none was more successful than Frank G. Sherman, who presided in the county temple thirty and more years ago.

But Frank Sherman was more than a good politician. As business man, frater-nalist, postmaster and state legislator, he led a life of much usefulness to the community, state and nation.

Frank Goodrich Sherman was born in Davenport in 1877 and was the son of John G. and Sarah (TenEyck) Sherman. He attended the town schools and then was a student at Oneonta State Normal. After he finished at that institution he taught for four years in the public schools of Delaware County, securing his first position when he was only sixteen.

In 1902 he entered the employ of the Barber Asphalt Paving Company, working six years for that concern in Seattle, Salt Lake City, Buffalo and Toronto, Canada. He came to Oneonta in 1908 and was first engaged with Clifford R. Morris in the furniture business, later taking over the interest of his partner. Still later he was a partner with Benjamin C. Packer in the furniture and undertaking business.

Selling to his partner, in 1915 Mr. Sherman formed the Sherman Contracting Company with Arthur Seybolt and William F. Kirchhoff. The firm paved River and Elm Streets in Oneonta but its largest jobs were in Endicott and Johnson City. The company purchased the Ingalls stone quarry at East End, operating it for its own needs and later supplying materials to contractors in various parts of the state.

Mr. Sherman was active in the affairs of the Republican party for two decades and was Otsego County chairman for six years. On February 1, 1922, he became postmaster by appointment of President Warren Harding and served in that office until 1934, when he was succeeded by Chester A. Miller.

Upon his retirement from the postoffice he again became active in the Republican party. He ran successfully for the State Assembly in 1934 and was re-elected the following year. He had once served for five years as a clerk in the Assembly and the experience and friendships gained during that period served him in good stead when he was chosen to represent Otsego County in the body.

Mr. Sherman served the city of Oneonta as a commissioner of Public Works for a number of years, being chairman most of the time. For five years he was a member of the Board of Visitors of the Oneonta State Normal School. Long a member of the Chamber of Commerce, he was its president for two terms.

He was a member of Oneonta Masonic Lodge and was a past high priest of the Royal Arch Chapter. A very enthusiastic Elk, he served the local lodge as exalted ruler and trustee and as district deputy exalted ruler.

Frank G. Sherman died of a heart attack on April 5, 1936, midway through his second Assembly term. The funeral was held in the First Presbyterian Church and burial was in the Davenport Cemetery. Surviving were his wife, Mrs. Hazel Foster Sherman, and step-sons William and Foster. The latter, an Air Force pilot, was killed in the Korean War.

## WHERE IT BEGAN

The song, "Down by the Old Mill Stream", should have special significance for Oneontans, for there is where it all began. Around McDonald's mills on the banks of Silver Creek was born the little hamlet which was to become Oneonta.

For years the life of the village centered around the saw and gristmills built by Joseph McDonald. Eventually the community grew to the north and east and the scene of business activity shifted. The locality kept its milling aspect, however, for the Elmore Milling Company, which closed early in 1965, occupied a site upon which mill wheels had turned for a hundred and fifty years.

The McDonald Mills were not the first. About 1780 Joachim Vanderwerker, and his father, John, who had erected, in 1775, the first house on the site of Oneonta, built a grist mill on the Susquehanna about forty rods southwest of the present Elmore mill. Anchor ice in winter and floods in the spring prevented efficient operation of the mill and the venture was soon abandoned.

In 1803 Joseph McDonald bought the mill, dismantled it and used some of the parts to build a sawmill on Silver Creek. At that time the stream took a different course than at present. After it had crossed Main Street near the present postoffice it turned southwest, crossed what is now Broad Street near the Bern store and followed the foot of the bank upon which Main Street is built. When near what is now Chestnut Street it veered south and joined the river some little distance above the present tailrace.

James McDonald bought the property from his brother in 1804 and added a wool carding and cloth finishing plant and a gristmill. As the land on the upper stretches of Silver Creek was cleared, the water flow diminished and it was found necessary to dig a raceway to the Susquehanna, which then flowed under the Prospect Street bank and turned south near Gas Avenue.

After the flood of 1816, which changed the river to its present course, another section of millrace and a new dam had to be constructed.

McDonald sold the mills in 1829 to Peter Collier and Jared Goodyear, who made extensive improvements to the gristmill. In 1851 the property was sold to Maurice Elwell, who operated the mill for over forty years.

Elwell enlarged the mill pond at the base of Barn Hill. For years this was the favorite recreation spot of the children and young people of the village. There was swimming in summer and excellent skating in the winter.

The mill was sold in 1895 to Irving and VanBuren Pruyn, who ran it until 1897 when W. O. Elmore of Albany bought it and installed his son, Edwin W. Elmore, as manager. After a few years Mr. Elmore went to Chicago as a member of a feed brokerage firm, leaving a Mr. Oliver in charge here.

E. W. Elmore returned to Oneonta in 1910, greatly enlarged the mill and re-organized the firm as the Elmore Milling Company. In 1921 his son, Earle P. Elmore, entered the company. Upon the death of E. W. Elmore in 1927 Harry M. Goldsmith took over the management.

In 1913 the mill was almost entirely destroyed by fire. Reconstruction was started at once and a thoroughly modern brick building was erected. During the years several additions were made.

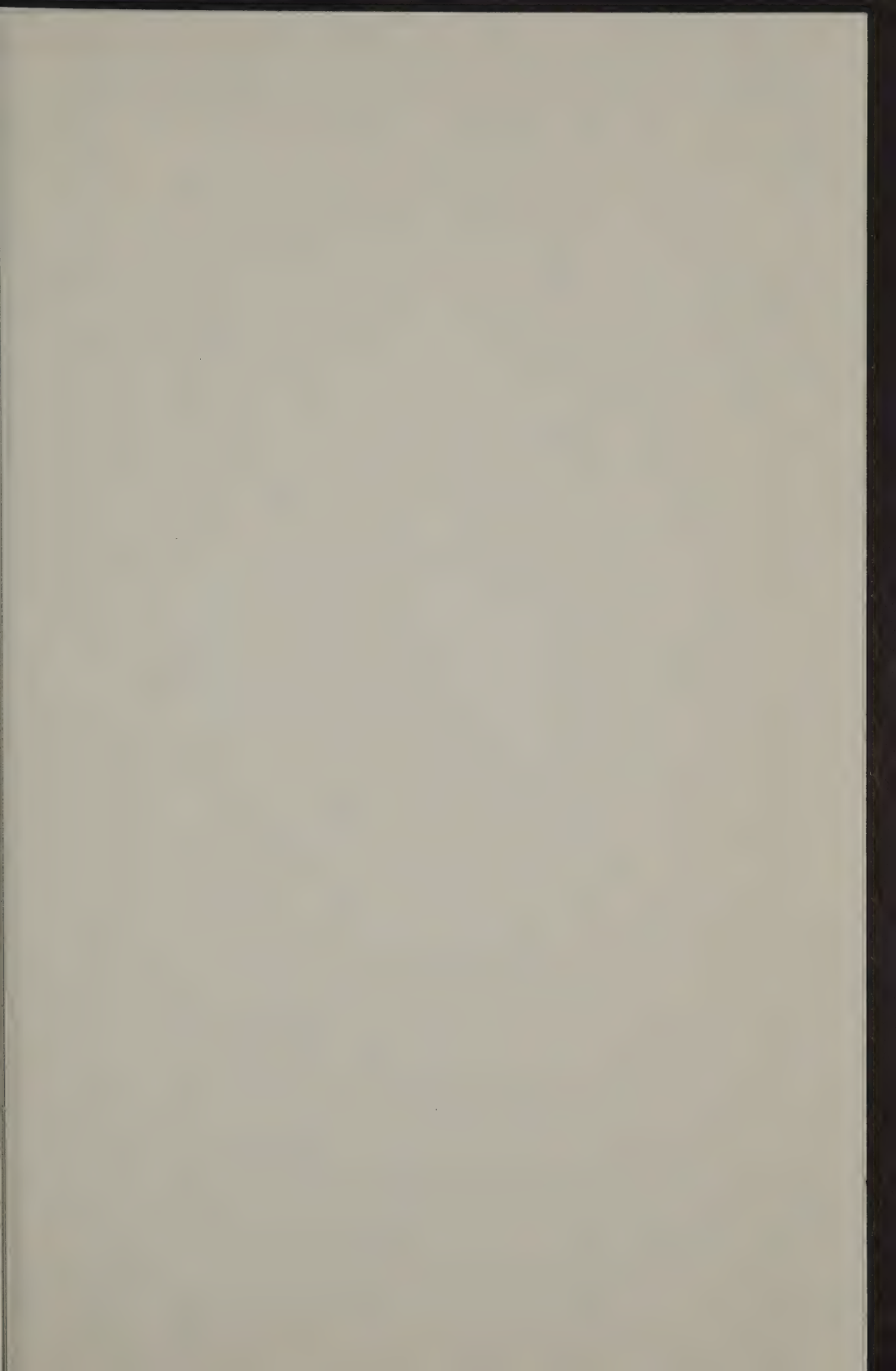








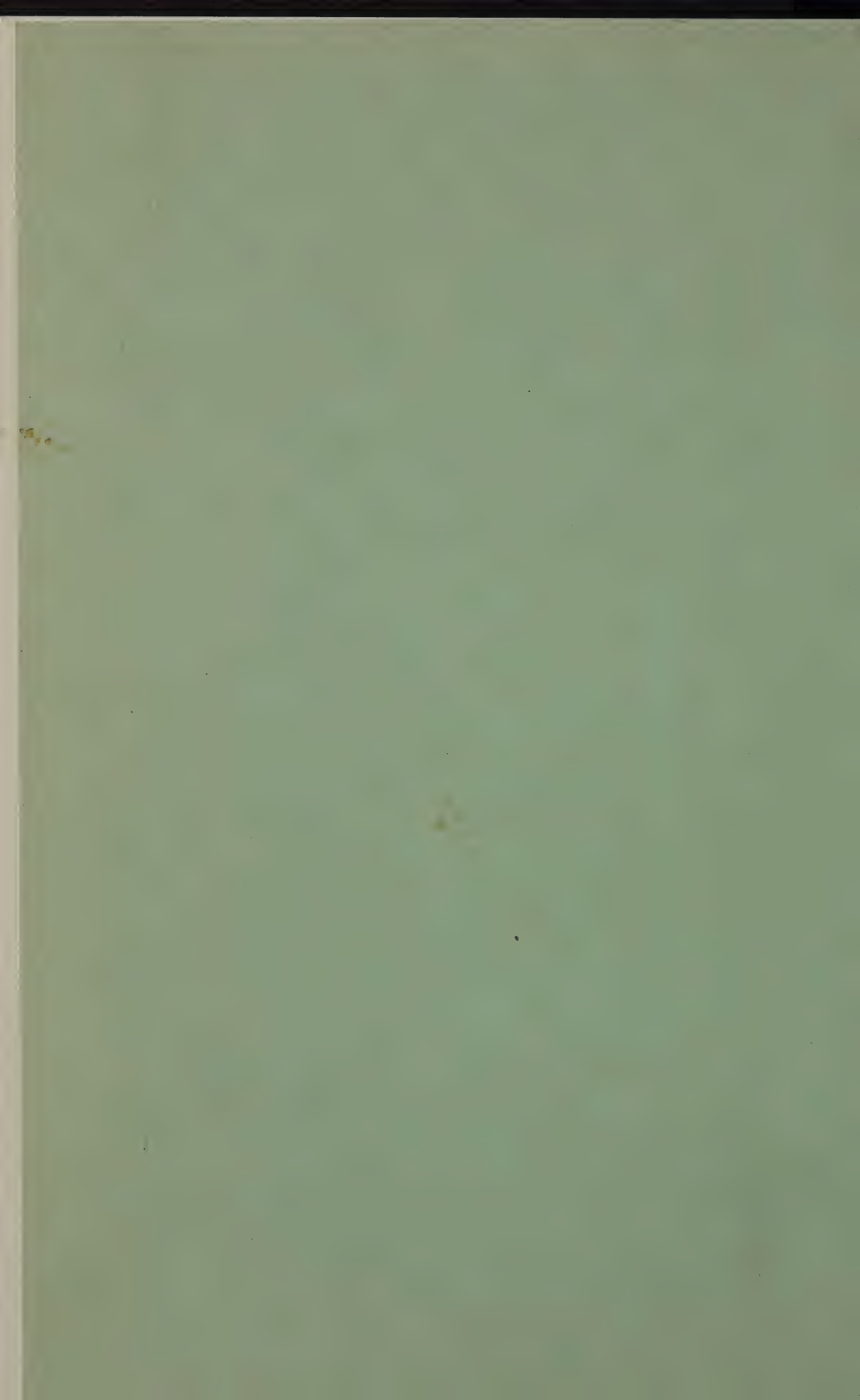


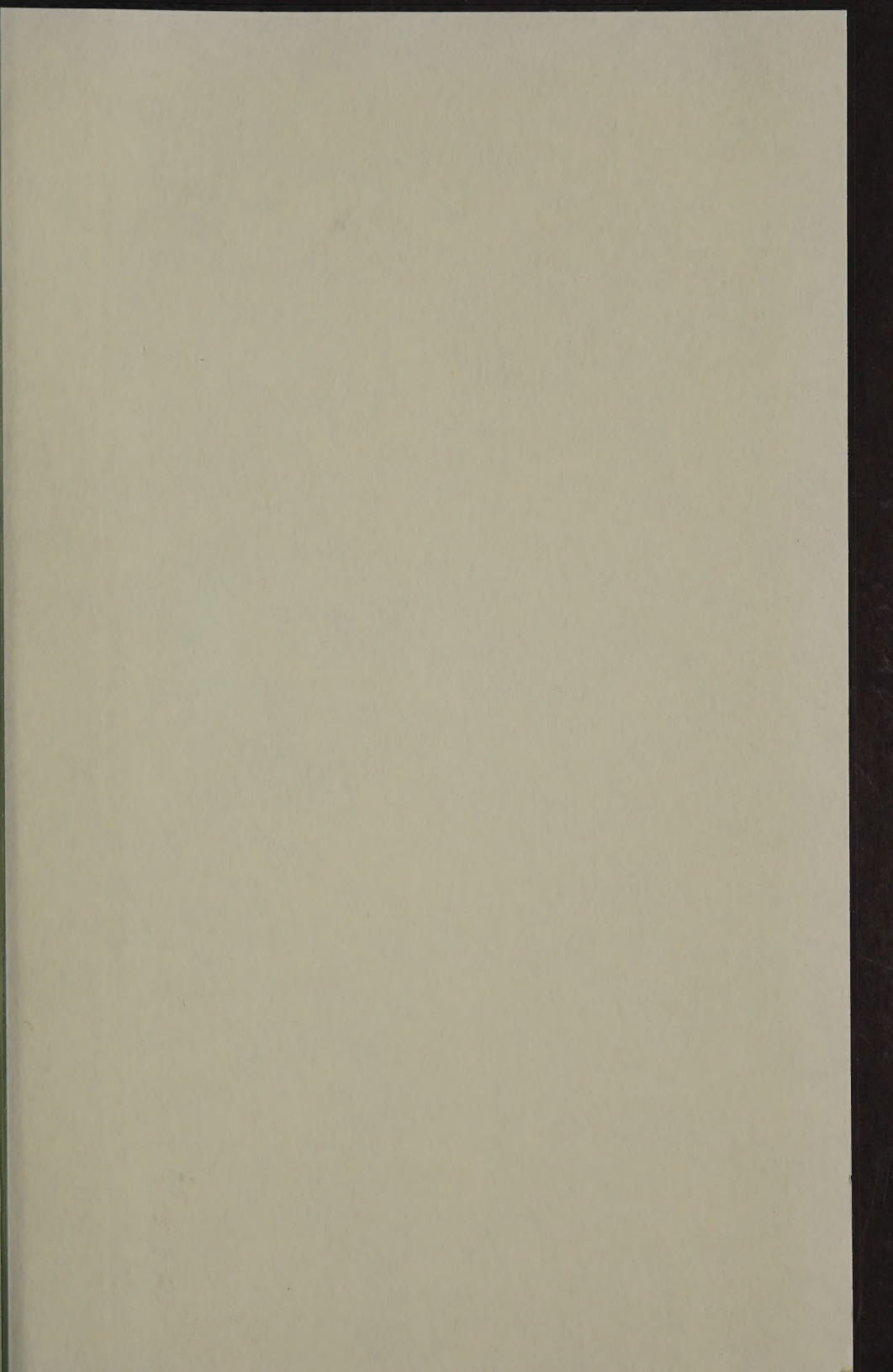
















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